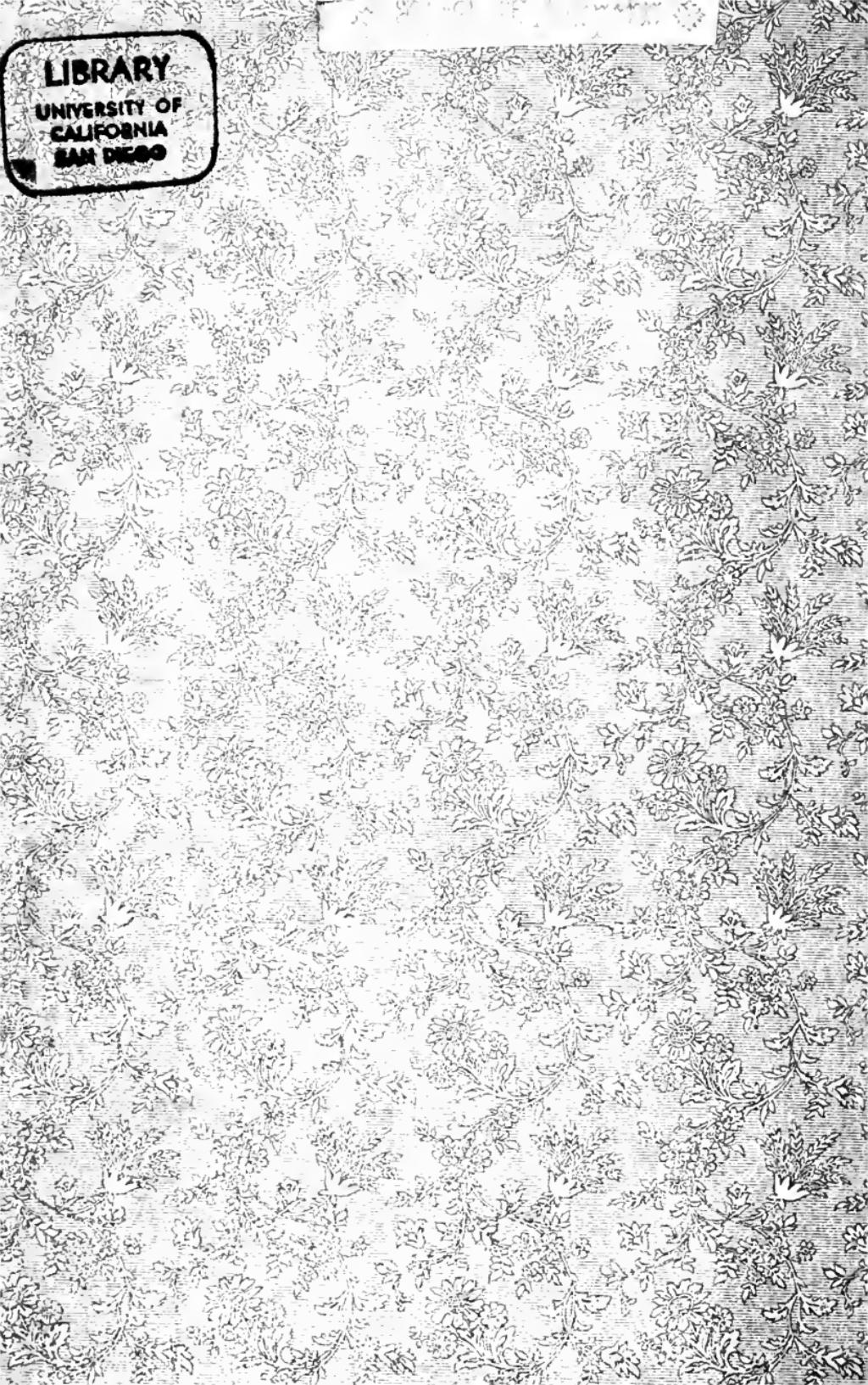




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SOLDIERS' STORIES
AND
SAILORS' YARNS

A BOOK OF

MESS-TABLE DROLLERY AND REMINISCEENCE
PICKED UP ASHORE AND AFLOAT
BY OFFICERS, NAVAL, MILITARY AND MEDICAL

" To the sessions of sweet, silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past."

SHAKESPEARE.—Sonnet xxx.

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P R E F A C E .

DE QUINCEY, in his charming essay on "Conversation," struck a most suggestive chord when he said:—"A feeling dawned upon me of a secret magic lurking in the peculiar life, velocities, and contagious ardour of conversation, quite separate from any which belonged to books; arming a man with *new forces*, and not merely with *a new dexterity in wielding the old ones*." When the company includes men who can say with PAUL GERHARDT: —

"I've met with storms and danger,
Even from my early years
With enemies and conflicts,
With fightings and with fears,

then the humour and the pathos of life become strangely mingled—the gay spirit of the frolicsome moments; the sudden call for cool courage and ready resource in the face of danger; the deeper tragedies wherein human power becomes unavailing; all these crop up in the experience of men who have "roughed it" over the globe.

Some years ago the editor of this volume was struck

with the singular interest of some "mess-table" stories which came under his hand from the pen of officers belonging to various branches of the service. He had the opportunity of increasing the number of these gradually, and now the collection is presented to the British Reader with good hope that he will find these "life-stories" both amusing and interesting. For, in truth, as has been observed, "every man is to himself what Plato calls the Great Year. He has his sowing time, and his growing time, his weeding; his irrigating, and his harvest."

?
1875
for India
date
1870

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MY SHELL AND SHARK STORY.

BY A NAVAL OFFICER.

CHAPTER I.

"**W**HOMO feels inclined for a day's shelling?"

"No one, I should imagine, possessed of an atom of common sense."

"What an idea!"

"O, it's only Markham."

A general laugh followed the last observation, which once more brought the interrogator's head from behind his curtain.

But to render the foregoing intelligible, and to bring me in a fair way for spinning my yarn, I must ask my readers to leave dear old England and its fogs, come through the Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal (it wasn't open in those days), down the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and on board H.M.S. Bee, lying snugly at anchor under the high land of Cape Guardafui.

It is breakfast time (8 A.M.), and the ward-room officers are, with one exception, seated round the table, the exception being Markham, who, having had the middle watch, is not supposed to make his appearance till "one bell" (8.30).

For the benefit of those unacquainted with the

interior economy of a man-of-war, I may mention that round the ward-room (the mess-place of the superior officers below the rank of captain) there are small curtained niches—yelept cabins—about six feet square, which are, so to speak, the officers' private quarters : bedroom, bathroom, sitting-room, library, study, &c., all merged into one, a perfect *multum in parvo*.

Markham, not having completed his toilet, listens to the remarks his question has called forth without comment ; but the last, “O, it's only Markham !” was rather too much ; so, as I have before written, out came his head from behind his curtain.

“ Well, Doctor,” he says, “ suppose it is only Markham. What then ? ”

“ Simply, my dear fellow, Mellon's remark holds doubly good.”

Mellon was the first who had responded to Markham's query. He was our senior lieutenant, and had been disrespectfully dubbed by the middies “ Old Sober-sides.”

“ O, every one knows your ideas, Doctor, and if we followed your advice, it's precious little we should see of the shore, except before sunrise or after dark.”

The Doctor's crotchet was the sun ; he objected most strongly to either officers or men being unduly exposed to its influence, and had on more than one occasion, by appealing to the Captain, nipped some pet expedition in the bud ; the leading spirit of these expeditions being nine times out of ten Markham, whose present craze was conchology.

Within the last few months H.M.S. Bee had been stationed at Trincomalee, which is a famous place for shells ; here they are sold in sandal-wood boxes fitted

with trays, and arranged in order. Some of us had invested in one of these boxes, hence the mania.

"At Markham's rejoinder the Doctor quietly chuckled, and remarked,

"There goes 'one bell;' you'd better be quick out of that den of yours, my boy, or you'll find your breakfast cold."

"By Jove! I forgot that; but hold on, I'll talk to you in a moment."

In a few minutes Markham emerges and takes his seat at the table, "armed for the fight and eager for the fray."

"Now, Doctor, I'm ready for you; fire away!" was his opening remark.

"I've nothing more to say on the matter," replies Esculapius.

"No? So much the better, then; for I shall have more time to eat my breakfast in peace." He relapses for a moment; then recommences,

"Well, who'll come with me? I purpose landing abreast the ship, walking across the valley (it's only about four miles, perhaps less), searching the beach for shells, and then returning. We'll take an interpreter, so that in the event of meeting any of the natives he can 'parley-voo' them, and I'll take my breechloader as some kind of protection—not that it's likely to be wanted; and as regards provender, we'll get the steward to put us up a hamper in which Mr. Bass will be duly represented. Now don't all answer at once. Who'll come?"

No one accepting the invitation, he turned to me.

"O Louis, do come, there's a good fellow; we're sure to find some shells, and—who knows?—perhaps some

rare specimens. Besides, after all said and done, it's better than remaining moped up on board all day."

"Don't you wish you may get it!" the Doctor chimed in. "Louis is too old a bird to be caught with chaff."

"Your advice wasn't asked," Markham replied rather angrily; "so perhaps you will be good enough to allow Louis to answer for himself."

Seeing Markham was really bent on carrying out his project, after a great deal of hesitation, and sadly against my better judgment, I eventually consented.

"What, Louis," the Doctor broke forth, "you surely are not mad enough to countenance such a freak?"

"Well, yes, Doctor," I answered; "as I've consented I suppose I must go; but never fear, our pith hats will protect us from the sun."

"Well, all I can say is, if you both get fever and sun-stroke it will serve you very well right."

With this parting salute—his eyebrows and chin elevated—the Doctor rose from his seat, and took himself off on deck, muttering as he left the ward-room something that sounded uncommonly like "One fool, &c."

"Thank goodness," said Markham, "we've shut up 'Old Pills;' so now let's go and get Boko to join us. He's sure to come, for he is really shell mad."

"All right; where is he?" I asked.

"O, as usual, in his cabin cleaning shells."

"Let us go and interview him, then; for if he comes, we're sure to have some fun."

But to understand why we were so anxious to enlist Boko you must know something about him.

Boko was the life of the mess. Not a young man by any means; on the contrary. He had been dubbed

Boko years before by a South Sea chief, and the sobriquet had stuck to him. Boko, by his own showing, had been everywhere and seen everything. It was little he couldn't do, and nothing he wouldn't attempt. Full of the most wonderful anecdotes, at which he himself laughed loudest. His laugh was contagious; for although one had heard the yarn perhaps a dozen times before, it was impossible to avoid laughing at his thorough appreciation of his own jokes. He was as well known as a town pump. From this it will be seen that Boko was a character. He was indeed! Good-natured to a fault, and usually ready to join in any mad freak. In effect he was more like a boy of twenty than a man considerably on the wrong side of forty; but this was Boko's weakness. He hated being thought an "old buster," to use his own expression. His real age was a mystery; his hair was quite white, having become so, he averred, in one night. The cause thereof he was always somewhat misty about; so his statement was accepted *cum grano salis*. The Doctor had once taken it into his head to find out how long Boko had been in the service; and by questions now and again as to the time he had served in different ships, all of which he noted down, discovered that, allowing him to have entered when he was thirteen years old, he had reached the very respectable age of ninety-eight.

Well, whatever his age, Boko was a right good fellow, as any of my readers who may recognise the description will own; and we all agreed that, although his tales were certainly marvellous, he himself believed them implicitly.

We found Boko sitting cross-legged on the deck of his cabin, with a wooden tub before him, cleaning

shells—not savoury ones, by any means. We did our best to induce him, but he was deaf to our entreaties.

“No, no, my boys, not much,” he said. “You won’t catch Boko stirring tack or sheet” (Boko was intensely nautical) “out of the ship, if we stop here a twelvemonth; it’s the most cutthroat doghole of a place I was ever in, except—” and here came some wonderful place no one had ever heard of. He wanted to buttonhole us for a yarn; but having neither time nor inclination to listen, we left him scrubbing away at his shells and roaring with laughter—at what we knew not.

Outside Boko’s cabin we were stopped by two of the youngsters, who wished to be of the expedition. They were capital specimens of the genus “middy,” both as handsome boys as one would meet. Dauntmore, or Jack, as he was always called, rejoiced in being six feet one in his stocking feet, although only seventeen, whilst Handel was of medium height, and about the same age. We gladly consented, our permission of course being dependent on the Captain’s.

We had some difficulty in obtaining the Captain’s leave. He didn’t like the idea, and told us so plainly; but Markham’s importunity eventually overcame his scruples. But he gave us to understand that he held us responsible for the youngsters. His anxiety was entirely for our personal safety, the natives of this district (Somauli Arabs) being treacherous in the extreme. Their character was very neatly summed up by a chief of Socrotra: “Never let Somauli man walk behind you; he spear you sure, if can do, and no get catch.”

I may mention that within six months of the incidents here narrated a boat’s crew of H.M.S.

Penguin, numbering eighteen men, was surprised at this very place, and every soul murdered in cold blood.

All being ready for starting, we found that both interpreters wished to accompany us; and as their services were not likely in our absence to be required on board, they received permission. We did not burden ourselves unnecessarily. Dauntmore (Jack), Handel, and I carried a walking-stick and flask of water; Markham a flask and his breechloader; and the interpreters each a fishing-basket, in which was stowed "comforts."

We did not get clear of the ship without sundry sarcasms from the Doctor, for which Markham gave a *quid pro quo*. Whilst the boat is making her way on shore, I will try and describe the locality. The description must be borne in mind, as the realisation of my story entirely hinges on it.

A reference to any atlas will show Cape Guardafui, the north-east point of Africa. The bay in which H.M.S. Bee was anchored is immediately within or on the western side of the cape, whilst the beach we purposed visiting is without, or on its eastern side. The two bays, or rather indentations, are separated by a narrow sandy valley about four miles wide. On the cape side the valley rises gradually to a height of five or six hundred feet, which elevation forms the cape. From its summit the cliffs fall perpendicularly to the sea; around their base the deep sea comes rolling in; no break, no beach, simply a shelf of rocks about twelve feet wide, covered at high water. This shelf extends round the cape from one beach to the other.

The commencement of our trip was not propitious, for on landing we found our path barred by a stalwart

native brandishing his spear, and demanding “backsheesh ;” the only answer he deigned to the interpreter’s inquiry as to what he wanted was “Backsheesh, backsheesh !” and as he spoke he laid his spear across the pathway. At this Markham lost his patience.

“Hassan,” said he to the interpreter, “just inform that copper-coloured individual that if he doesn’t make himself scarce, and pretty quickly too, I’ll give him such a dose of ‘backsheesh’ (touching his breech-loader) “as he doesn’t bargain for, and not in his hand either.”

What Hassan said to him I can’t vouch for ; but the noble savage, doubtless thinking “discretion the better part of valour,” and perhaps not altogether appreciating Markham’s looks, after gesticulating, swearing, and scowling, made off to the rocks, at intervals facing round and shaking his spear defiantly at us.

The path now being clear we set off on our journey, and had not proceeded a quarter of a mile ere we found, to our cost, that our walk was likely to be a very different affair from what we had anticipated, and I must e’en confess that, had it not been the fear of being laughed at on board, we should have given up in disgust.

Our way lay over soft sand, in which, at every step, we sank up to our knees ; in addition to which the sand was literally carpeted with a description of creeper bearing large thorns from two to three inches in length ; these thorns pierced the leather of our boots as though it had been paper, and consequently made us most careful as to our every footstep. O, the scorching sun ! Not a breath of wind ; and the very air we breathed seemed straight from a heated oven. The glare also from the sand was most painful.

At times, from the sand giving under our feet, we found ourselves on all fours ; and then, to vary the monotony, at full length on our back, gazing at the heavens ; and on each and every occasion thorns, thorns, thorns !

At length, footsore, bleeding, parched, and weary, we reached the opposite beach, having taken four hours to encompass the distance, some three or four miles.

The sea-breeze had now set in, which made us, comparatively speaking, " new men ; " so after bathing our " poor feet " we proceeded to discuss the creature comforts.

Imagine our feelings on opening the baskets at discovering that the drinkables consisted of two pint bottles of beer, and a bottle of brandy ; not a drop of water, and not the faintest hope of procuring any ; facing us the sea, and landwards in every direction for miles a glittering expanse of white sand ; our flasks had been emptied long since, and we were parched with thirst. Blessings were not poured on the steward's head. I blamed Markham for not having seen what was put up, and he retaliated on me. Recriminations, however, were useless, there was nothing for us but to make the best of it ; so having divided the beer into six portions, each drank his share. Instead of relieving, it only served to intensify our thirst.

Further investigation as to the contents of the baskets showed us that the edibles consisted of salt-beef sandwiches, cheese, sardines, and bread—all, with the exception of the bread, thirst provoking ; so they remained untouched.

It was now 2 P.M. Shell-hunting was out of the

question, as it would take us all our time to get back by sunset.

"Well, Markham, how do you purpose returning?" I ask. "I vote round the cape, for I'll be hanged if I tramp back through that horrid valley again."

"Don't be an idiot!" he politely answers. "You know the old adage? 'Rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.' (Markham never missed an opportunity of a quotation.) "You see," he adds, "the tide is already making, and as sure as you attempt it, so sure, before you are half-way, you'll either be tide-bound and have to take to the cliffs, or else you'll be washed off the rocks."

"You're certainly a Job's comforter," I reply; "but, notwithstanding, I'm determined to risk it, if any one will join me."

At this Hassan and Jack elected my route, Ali and Handel preferring to accompany Markham.

Ere starting homeward we each took a thimbleful of brandy, and then consigned the remainder to the waves, fearing that thirst might perhaps tempt us to drink it; we also arranged our sumptuous banquet on the beach as an offering to Neptune.

I trust he appreciated it more than we had done.

Before parting company Markham tried very hard to persuade us to alter our resolution, but was unsuccessful; so with a chin-chin off we set on our separate paths.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the conformation of the land, our routes for some distance lay nearly at right angles, mine being along the seashore, and Markham's across country. We continue in sight of each other about twenty minutes, during which time our walk is over a hard sandy beach, fanned by the sea-breeze; this brings us to the shelf, which I have before mentioned as encircling the cape from bay to bay. On mounting this shelf we turn to wave a last adieu, but find that we have lost sight of our friends.

Our path lies before us, and my heart sinks within me; for I discover, when too late, that I have shunned Scylla, only to fall into Charybdis. The shelf is at the most only about twelve feet wide, and covered with seaweed. On our right the sea, barely four feet from its edge, with a flowing tide; and on our left the cliffs, rising perpendicularly to a height of five or six hundred feet, and showing scarcely foot-room for a goat.

"Pleasant," is Jack's remark. "But never mind; anything is better than that vile waste of sand and thorns."

For nearly an hour we pursue our slippery way, tumbling, scrambling, wading, often up to our necks in water; but after recovering from the effect of our first disenchantment, in high spirits, and sanguine as to the result of our experiment: we cannot, however, avoid casting occasional anxious glances at the sea,

which is slowly but surely approaching the level of our platform.

“Push on, boys!” is our cry; and on we trudge, laughing at our frequent duckings, and helping each other out of our difficulties.

Presently we receive a gentle hint to put our best foot foremost by a slight sprinkling of spray. This makes us redouble our efforts, but to no purpose; for in a few minutes every wave, as it strikes the shelf, envelops us in a blinding shower.

I look at my watch—four o’clock; three hours yet to high water. Still on! Ten minutes more and the waves are breaking at our feet. Fortunately the breeze is dying away, and the sea becoming calm. A wave rather stronger dashes in; Jack is down. An instant sees him on his feet again; but to retain our footing is momentarily more difficult. Another dozen yards and I am off my pins. We can’t stand this; we must take to the cliffs. What will become of us? As these thoughts pass through my mind, our further progress is arrested by a gap in the shelf some forty or fifty feet wide; deep water, and the waves breaking at the foot of the cliffs. On the opposite side the shelf rises about six feet.

“Hurrah!” we exclaim. “Once over that, and we shall be in safety.”

“Off with your coat, Jack; we must swim it. Hassan will take our things over on his head.”

“All right, sir,” Jack replies; and Hassan is soon ready, with our clothes in a bundle on his head. He is sitting on the rocks, lowering himself gradually into the water, and is on the point of letting go his hold, when Jack yells, “Come back! come back! For God’s sake, come back! Look!”

I look, but cannot speak. We both seize hold of Hassan, and haul him bodily on to the shelf, his eyes almost starting from his head, his face an indescribable unearthly blue, and trembling in every limb. There, only a few feet from us, is a huge shark, his cold white eye looking up, half turned, showing his white belly, and keeping himself in position by a gentle motion of his fins.

For a moment not a word is uttered. Hassan at length breaks the spell. "Allah, Allah, il Allah! Allah Akbar! Allah, Allah il Allah! Allah Akbar!" he drones forth in a tremulous monotone, the words following one another as quickly as his breath will allow.

Jack and I lose no time in robing ourselves.

"Don't sit mumbling there, Hassan," I say; and enforce my words by a good tug at his wool. "Look alive, Jack; there's nothing for it but the cliffs."

We are now almost knee-deep in water. O, how I wish we had taken Markham's advice! But we have no time for vain regrets. We get close to the cliffs to prevent being washed off the shelf, and retrace our steps in the hope of finding some place of ascent, and providentially soon discover one.

"Quick, quick! here is a chance. Be careful! Hold on like grim death; it's our only hope."

In less time than it has taken to write we are making our way by inches up the face of the cliffs. Our position is awfully precarious, and a false step certain death; yet (speaking for myself) I am most thankful that I am out of water. I notice, as we scramble higher and higher, that the sound of the waves is growing more indistinct. Soon it ceases altogether, and I am flattering myself that we must be

nearing the summit, when my head butts against some obstruction. For the first time I now dare take my eyes from my hands and look round. A hundred feet below is the sea (the shelf is completely submerged); above, an overhanging rock which shuts out the sky.

“Go on, sir!” uttered by Jack, are the first words spoken since leaving the shelf.

“Can’t get any higher, Jack,” I reply. “We must go back, until we find some place where we can sit down.”

To remain as we are for any length of time is beyond human endurance. A few words explain this to Hassan.

If ascending had been dangerous, descending was ten thousand times more so; every minute seems a life-time. Luckily the tension on our nerves is not of long duration. About twenty feet beneath the rock which had stopped our ascent we find sitting room.

By this time we are all pretty well fagged; our hands are torn and bleeding, and we are suffering intolerably from thirst. A short rest, and then comes a discussion as to our future movements. Immediately below, and on our left as we sit facing the sea, is a ledge, which appears as though it had been scarped out of the face of the cliff. As far as we can see along it, it is about two feet wide. We see also that it spans the gap; so it strikes us that if we can only manage to work ourselves along this ledge until we are on the western side of the gap, the chances are that we shall be able to descend on to the shelf, and so continue our journey.

“Well, Jack, what’s to be done?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know. I wish I hadn’t come.”

"Nonsense, boy ; nonsense ! Never say die ; make the best of it. We must do one of two things—either remain here, or cross the ledge. You know perfectly well that we cannot expect a boat until Markham gets back, when, finding that we don't turn up, they will come in search of us. But long before they arrive it will be dark, and then it will be impossible to get down out of this; so take it as you will, here we shall be obliged to remain until daylight to-morrow."

"If I have to stop here till to-morrow," he replies, "I shall go mad."

"Very well, then ; we must try the ledge."

Very easy to say "try the ledge," but the thought of it even is sickening. Imagine a mantel-piece two feet wide, eighty or ninety feet high, upwards a perpendicular wall, downwards a sheer fall, and you have before you the ledge, with the exception of the former being level, whilst the latter is quite the contrary.

The more we look at it, the less we like it ; but beggars can't be choosers, and we have no time to waste.

"Come along, then," at last Jack says in desperation. "You lead, Mr. Louis ; I'll follow, and Hassan shall bring up the rear."

Jack was reckoning, however, without his host.

"No, sar ! I not go ! I stop ! I 'fraid ! I no like it !" Hassan joins in.

"Very well, stop, then," Jack angrily replies. Then, "Go ahead, sir ; he'll follow, never fear."

We scramble down a few feet, and I get on to the ledge. As I turn my back to the sea, and grasp the face of the cliff, my heart almost ceases to beat ; I notice too that Jack is deathly pale, so remark that perhaps after all it will be the safer plan not to attempt it.

"Go on, for goodness sake!" he hurriedly answers.

Seeing that he is determined, I make room for him, and we commence crossing, making our way by a side-long movement, clutching where there is clutching room, and feeling the right foot securely placed before bringing the left up to it, our eyes alternately fixed on hands and feet.

Hassan, as Jack had said, had no idea of being left in the lurch, so without remark had dropped into his allotted place.

For a time all goes well, and we get over the ground very fairly, when, without any previous warning, we are brought to a standstill by the ledge sinking about five feet, not a gradual slope but a sudden drop.

Going back is out of the question; so kneeling down and clinging for bare life, I lower myself inch by inch until I am again on my feet.

Moving slightly to the right, I wait while the others descend; soon they are beside me, and we continue on as before.

"Are we to keep on like this for ever?" Jack asks.

The words are scarcely out of his mouth, when on extending my right arm my hand strikes against the rock. One glance, and the fact rushes on me. The ledge ceases! We are in a veritable *cul de sac*!

My sensations I cannot now analyse, although every incident is as fresh on my memory as on that day, now thirteen years since.

I tell Jack that we can go no farther, and must return.

"I can't do it," he gasps. "I'm feeling sick and dizzy; I shan't be able to hold on much longer."

At this juncture Hassan chimes in,

"Sar, sar, I nearly falling?"

I am at my wit's end, when suddenly it occurs to me that, if I can turn and sit down, I may be able to help the others.

"It's all right, Jack. Hold on, old fellow," I say ; "don't funk."

Having the dead wall on my right to cling to, I succeed without any difficulty, but for my companions it is a very different affair.

"Now, Jack, come close to me ; put your right hand on my shoulder, and kneel down." This he does mechanically. "Now place your arm round my neck, and I'll clasp your body." This is accomplished. "Now let your right leg hang over the ledge." This also he does. "Now lean the whole weight of your body on your left knee, turn slightly so as to grasp my collar with your left hand, and shift your right until you bear on my thigh."

He manages this, I still retaining my hold on his waist ; then, by gradually shifting his right leg over his left and keeping his body well inclined inwards, after a moment of awful suspense he is sitting beside me with his long legs dangling over the precipice. My next move is to change places with Jack ; he with his left hand takes firm hold of the wall, and I put my arm round his waist to steady myself.

In half the time it took to seat Jack, Hassan (who is as lithe as an eel) is in position.

To make matters worse, Jack now breaks down completely, laughing and crying by turns, and trembling to such an extent as to cause me to cling to him lest he should drop off the ledge.

Hassan is immobile ; he neither speaks nor moves, but sits with his eyes fixed, staring vacantly.

Let any one picture our plight as we sit side by

side, with our legs overhanging the shelf, some hundred feet beneath us.

We can look back along the road we have come, and find that we have crossed the gap ; the drop (or rather rise from this side) plumbs its centre. Had it not been for this rise we might be able to regain the position we had left ere attempting the ledge, and which now from the force of comparison seems a very haven of refuge.

My first care is to soothe Jack, which after a time I succeed in doing, so much as to make him talk coherently.

The poor brave lad excuses himself, and says, "I'm not frightened, but I feel so weak and shaky, I'm sure I couldn't possibly stand on my legs."

This is a self-evident fact, as he is still trembling like an aspen-leaf.

From the time of getting seated I have been casting about in my mind for some means of escape from our quandary ; but puzzle my brain as I may, I see only too plainly that our only hope lies in getting back so far on the ledge as to be able to drop off into deep water on the boat's arrival. The remedy is almost as bad as the disease, but it is absolutely the sole chance left us. But how to manage it. Neither Jack nor Hassan can trust himself on his legs.

Jack solves the problem.

"Couldn't we," he suggests, "shuffle along in the sitting posture ?"

Happy thought ! But Master Hassan (who is on the right, and must therefore lead the way) will not budge. First I entreat. No use. Then threaten. Still same result. As a last resource I tell him that if he doesn't move at once I'll pitch him off the

ledge. This has the desired effect, and sets him in motion.

Our mode of progression is neither painless nor improving to our garments; still it is progress, and we are thankful for very small mercies.

At last we reach the rise: beneath us is the gap. The shark has taken his departure; but, to add to our misery, the sun is painfully near the horizon, and in these latitudes there is no twilight.

"Jack, could you manage, do you think, to mount the rise?" I ask, "for then we can get back to our first resting-place."

He shakes his head, and answers, "Not to save my life."

This makes me desperate, for it has just dawned upon me that a boat might pull about all night without discovering our whereabouts; so I resolved on making an attempt to find my way back; for I knew that although one boat would certainly be sent in search of us, another was sure to be stationed at the beach on the chance of our return.

I communicate my resolution to Jack, but he implores me most piteously not to leave him. I urge him not to be childish, and explain that he has only to sit still and wait; and I remind him that he must not get impatient and out of heart if the boat doesn't arrive as soon as he expects. Ultimately he consents; and I mount the rise, assuring him that if I find myself unable to scale the cliffs he may shortly see me back again.

"Please be as quick as you possibly can," are his parting words as I set out.

I recross the ledge, looking at every step for some means of ascent; finding none, I commence descend-

ing by the same path we had originally climbed. When about half-way down an opening presents itself on my left. I branch off a short distance, and soon am once more scrambling upwards as fast as the quickly fading light will permit.

Three bells (9.30 P.M.) are striking on board the Bee as I reach the beach, and sink utterly prostrate on the sand. A boat is in waiting. On coming to I find my head supported by the Doctor. "Water, water!" are my first words, which he gives me very sparingly; he then has me carried to the boat, where I get some brandy, which revives me so as to enable me to tell my story. A boat, with Markham in charge, has already gone in quest; but in the twinkling of an eye we are flying through the water at racing speed to the rescue, impelled by the brawny arms of twenty British blue-jackets.

We are no sooner "under weigh" than the Doctor begins—

"I told you so; I knew how it would turn out! What crass foolishness," &c. This is too good a chance; so he proses on, riding his hobby to his heart's content. I bear the infliction silently with a good grace, but am thankful when it is brought to a full stop by Boko—who is steering—hailing,

"Oars, men; here comes the other boat. Have you got them?" yells Boko, as soon as the boat closes us.

"No; can see nothing of them," Markham answers.

"Come with us, then, Louis is here," Boko calls back. "Give way, men!" and with a will the boat's crew bend their backs to the oars.

On we speed, shaping our course parallel to the cliffs. It is quite dark, and the sea calm as a mill-pond; the

plash of the oars and the rippling of the waves against the rocks being the only sounds that disturbed the stillness.

Presently Boko hails, "Jack!"

No answer.

Ten minutes more, and again he shouts, "Jack!"

This time a faint response comes to us from some distance ahead.

"Shove her along, men!" Boko excitedly urges; and the boat is almost lifted out of the water.

A dozen strokes, and the answer comes from directly overhead.

"Now you carry on, Louis," Boko says, "for you know the place."

"Can you see us, Jack?"

"Only when the oars dip," he answers.

"Where is the gap?" is my next question.

"Immediately under me, of course; but it is so dark that I cannot distinguish the water from the rocks."

We are in the same predicament; so we get the boat stern on and back gradually in, guided by the sound of Jack's voice, hitting the middle of the gap to a nicety.

So far so good. Our first manœuvre is to thrash the water with the oars, so that in the event of the shark or any of his companions being in the neighbourhood, they might be warned off the premises.

This being done,

"Now, Jack, listen! We have left you plenty of room, and will keep the boat in position. You must turn and lower yourself gently over the ledge; but before quitting your hold, bring your legs together; and directly you let go, close your arms into your sides.

No sooner in the water than we'll have you in the boat.
Do you understand what I say?"

"Yes, I understand; but I don't know how I ever shall manage," he whimpers.

"Let Hassan come first," Boko suggests, "and that will give the boy courage."

Hassan's answer comes back very quickly,

"All right, sar; I come. Look out!"

We cannot see how he contrives; a splash in the water is our first intimation, and our dusky interpreter is speedily hauled on board.

It is no easy matter to persuade Jack. We all try by turns, but without success.

At last Markham (whose boat is at the entrance of the gap) gets impatient, and hails,

"Mr. Dauntmore, if you are determined not to come I shall order both boats back to the ship, and will return for you at daylight."

This settles it.

"All right, then," the poor lad moans. "I know I haven't the strength, and shall tumble all of a heap. Look out for me! I'm coming!"

We are instantly on the *qui vive*, two or three of the men more than half overboard in their anxiety to grasp hold of him.

We have some time to wait; then a plunge, and Jack is in the boat; he had, as he predicted, fallen "all of a heap," and was terribly shaken; his hands too are much damaged from striking the rocks in his fall.

"Give way on board, men!" is the order; and thankfully we quit the scene of our adventures.

Our anxiety is now about Jack; the Doctor is busily engaged with him, but he lies with his eyes shut, and has not spoken. We are half-way to the ship ere he

regains consciousness, and then in a short time is quite delirious.

Signal-guns and rockets are now being fired, which bodes anything but a pleasant reception from the Captain.

The instant we are alongside the chief's head appears over the gangway.

"Are all safe?" is his first question.

On being answered in the affirmative,

"Let Mr. Markham and Mr. Louis come to me in my cabin at once."

"Very good, sir," from Markham, and he disappears. "We're in for a wigging, that's certain. What an idiot you were, Louis, not to take my advice! You know Jack is a personal friend of the skipper's, and this affair will make him a thousand times more particular than he is now. However, it can't be helped."

On being ushered into the cabin, we found the Captain looking very grave.

"Why, gentlemen," he commences, "were you not on board at sunset? You know the station orders." As he speaks he catches sight of me, and a broad grin spreads over his features.

Seeing his eyes fixed on me, I wonder what on earth he can be smiling at. I look up, and catch sight of my face in a mirror. It is covered with a mixture of dust, perspiration, and blood. My necktie is gone, shirt buttonless, and neck exposed; and to complete, my nether garments are hanging in shreds.

"Well, gentlemen, what reason have you to assign for disobeying, not only my orders, but the written orders of the commander-in-chief?" he continues, on recovering the effect of my appearance.

Markham leaves me to reply; so I tell him precisely what has happened. He is very wroth.

"You have a perfect right," he says, "to jeopardise your own life; but how dare you lead a mere child into such danger? I can only tell you this, if anything happens to Mr. Dauntmore, I'll try you both by court-martial, as sure as my name is Benbow. That will do, gentlemen; you may go."

We next had to endure the quizzing of our messmates; but, like good Samaritans, they let us off easily—for the present.

A good night's rest and we are none the worse, except Dauntmore, whose adventures ended in a severe attack of fever. For days he raved of sharks and ledges, and great fears were entertained of his recovery. After a very protracted illness we again had the pleasure of seeing him crawl on deck; but he rarely referred to his Guardafui experiences.

Markham and his party had got back about ten minutes past six; their return had been a repetition of our morning's trip. He waited until 7.30, when, seeing no signs of our appearance, he hailed the ship for another boat to be sent to the beach, and went in search. When we met him, he had given up all hope, thinking that we must have been unable to scale the cliffs, and so necessarily washed off the shelf. This proves how correctly I had conjectured that a boat might pull about all night and not discover us on the ledge.

The next day a party was formed to visit the scene of our adventures. Three or four climbed up and got on the ledge, but none cared to cross it.

One thing remains a mystery to this day. Our third lieutenant and two men attempted to gain the summit of the cape by the same road up which I had toiled.

From the boat we watched them. They succeeded in getting little more than half-way, when they came back, and told us that it was utterly impossible that I could have gained the top by that path, although they admitted that as far as they got there were marks showing that some one had recently been there.

How I clambered up I know not. The fact remains I got there, and, what is more, the latter part of the ascent was in the dark.

This was my first and last expedition in search of shells. Need I add that it was some time before Markham and I heard the last of our trip across country at Cape Guardafui?

PRINGLE'S MESS-STORY.

"**W**HERE it happened," says Pringle of Ours, "was in a well-known port of a distant Eastern island: why it happened was because a not-over-wise judge chose to put his own construction on the law of procedure, as it affected a foreigner.

"It won't do to peach upon and mouth out the real name of the place, and I don't care to saddle it with a fictitious one, but I'll try and word-picture the locality, and leave you fellows to guess at its whereabouts and designation.

"First and foremost, then, it is a hot, steamy hot, small, old-fashioned town of Dutch origin, situated on sea-board, at the south-west corner of an island which, even when the Mynheers held possession, was worth no end of rix-dollars to their State; nowadays I can't say how many tens of thousands of pounds its exports bring in yearly to our revenue.

"Pretty it is to look upon, especially from the sea; green and luxuriant at all seasons; not a bit like rocky Gib., or white glaring Malta, or dried up Aden, which, likely enough, you have touched at on your voyage out. When you get within the harbour—a ticklish manœuvre in navigation to do safely—you are hemmed in on one side by a picturesque, well-wooded, hilly spur, on which many charming bungalows stand, and on the

other by a rocky promontory where are built some fortifications, useless in these modern times. In front, close at hand, is a sweeping bay, its shores clothed with groves —topes is the local name—of cocoa-nut palms growing almost down to the water's edge, and half-hiding *nigger* huts and European houses nestling among them. A little away there lies the straggling native town and bazaars backed by belts of fruit and timber trees; and in the far distance, a range of lofty mountains, overtopped by one of the highest peaks in the land, closes in the scene. So much for the still life of the place; now for its bustle and vitality.

"Steamers of the P. and O. and other companies arriving daily, filling the narrow, sandy streets with buxom, sparkling, rosy English maidens—such contrasts to their listless, delicate, 'washed-out' resident sisterhood—with all sorts and conditions of men, too, who either gad about with their fair companions, or, taking their rest and their ieed cups in the verandahs of the many hotels, allow themselves to fall into the clutches of cute Moormen and other jewellers, arrant rogues, ready to swear by Mahomet or Buddha, as the faith may be, that gilt copper is virgin gold, and glass or paste veritable country-dug, precious stones. Now and again a big man-of-war will look in and deluge the fort and *pettah* with its blue-jackets; and not unfrequently a French trooper, bound Cochin-Chinawards, comes for coal and provender; and then every nook and corner, every *boutique* and bazaar, rings with the voluble tongues of the soldiers of France, 'vieilles moustaches,' newly-fledged 'piou-pious' (recruits), and piquant, but rarely pretty, vivandières.

"Besides these extraneous attractions, so to call them, the little outpost—for an outpost it is of the colony—

has a small but pleasant muster within itself of English, Anglo-Dutch, and other European inhabitants—its multitudinous petticoat-garmented and otherwise feminine-looking aborigines go for nothing—and what with their society and a gun and line for sport, it is not, believe me, half such a bad place, as places in that habitat of coffee and spices count, to be, to do, and to sniffer in."

"I know right well where we are," exclaims Charley Wise. "Point de Ga—in Cey—"'

"Shut up, youngster, shut up! you are too raw from the crammer's; never mind the name; listen to the story.

"At the outbreak of the Crimean war I was on detachment at the place I have been trying to depict. Two companies of my regiment, the same number of Malay riflemen, twenty or thirty Royal Gunners, and a few gun Lascars—slaveys to the Artillery—composed the snug garrison of which Major Tim O'Leary had the command. In piping times of peace, this worthy Irishman was an easy-going kind of chief enough; but now that grim-visaged war had shown his wrinkled front, he turned to the strictest and most martinet of captains, stepping from that which, in the first instance, seemed to us sublime to that which in the other instance we considered ridiculous; for it came across our minds that Nichoias had too much upon his hands just then, in and about Sebastopol to bother himself with such an out-of-the-way insignificant fortress as ours. However, on this point O'Leary was at variance with his men—not an unusual occurrence when drills and field-days are in question. He caused the old rusty cannon of the year one, mounted on the tumbling-to-pieces batteries, to be scaled and furbished; he hunted up shot and

shell ; he indented for ‘gunpowther,’ and he paraded our lives out on a large grassy glacis too handy by half. ‘Be Jabus,’ said he, ‘if Gortchakoff or any odder Off has a moinde to come this way, we’ll be afther taching him that we are not aslape and dhraming.’

“ Well, in the midst of all these precautions, we were startled one morning by a report from the light-house, that a man-of-war, showing no colours, was in the offing making for the port. Down we all rushed to the ramparts and other ‘coigns of vantage’ overlooking the sea ; there, sure enough, was a big ship, under full sail, steering dead for the harbour’s mouth, and, before we could surmise who or what she was, or carry into effect one fourth of the tactics O’Leary had planned, there anchored right under our guns—not, fortunately for us, a foe of the Russ, but a friend of a Frank, no other indeed, than the crack French corvette *Le Falcon*, Captain Hippolyte Achille Hector de la Tasse de Sèvres.

“ It is, or rather it used to be, the fashion to disparage the nautical abilities and proclivities of ‘Moosoo,’ but upon my word, so far as *Le Falcon* was concerned, no ship of any nation could have been better handled. Threading the narrows and hidden dangers of the channel of entrance, shaving the ‘Drunken Sailor’* by a fathom or two, in she flies, a cloud of canvas set low and aloft ; and just as we are thinking where she is driving to, and that a few yards more and, smash, she’ll go ashore—tap tap—we hear the beat of a drum—t-i-r-r-i-p—a long shrill whistle follows ; men

* Pringle has made a hydrographical error. The Drunken Sailor rock is not where he places it (*vide charts*).—*Charles Wise, Second Lieutenant Dreadnoughts.*

swarm up the rigging ; splash goes an anchor ; rattle, rattle, runs out a chain cable ; bang, bang ! belch out starboard and port guns, and before the smoke of a salute clears away there lies the corvette safe and snug, every inch of sail furled, her tricolor at her peak, her long pennant streaming, and looking as if, instead of five minutes, she had been five days at her moorings. It was really a pretty sight to see ; and ‘Bravo, Mounseer !’ we exclaimed, while O’Leary, though he did not much affect our allies, having in his youth fought them, heartily and honestly joined in the cheer.

“Once in, and it appeared as if De la Tasse de Sèvres had not the most remote intention of ever leaving us again. Day after day, week after week slipped by, and he and his remained ; what for, except to cement *l'entente cordiale* in ‘grogs’ and ‘bittère biere,’ to compliment our wives and to flirt with our sisters, our cousins, and our aunts, never cropped up. The officers, delicately asked the why and wherefore, shrugged their shoulders and pleaded ignorance. ‘Le Capitaine l’ordonne,’ said one ; ‘Pas mon affaire,’ said another ; Jules Pilule, the doctor, was the only one who ever went beyond those three or four words of speech, and that to me, for the reason that he thought I favoured a love-suit of his with a sister of mine, and so was inclined to be confidential.

“Jules,” I remarked one day, “what the dickens is keeping that craft of yours in these waters, ‘grounding on her beef bones,’ as English sailors have it ! Is it for despatches by your consort-ship, as La Tasse tells us ? Are you waiting to meet the Russians here, or are you funky, old man, to go out, lest one of Nicholas’s big cruisers should pounce down and chaw

you up? Ain't you sick and tired of the place, Pill?"

"Preengall," replies he, "to me it is zee zame, vedder vee ground on zee beef-bone or on zee bone of zee fowl, vee eat all zee days in zee curry. Zee place is agréable, zee ladies charming, zee opper" (a common sort of rice-cake) "is sheap, and zee pay continue; vat more I vant, mon lieutenant? But, tenez, I vill visper someting in your air. De la Tasse 'as von affair considérable on ees 'ands. Ah, c'est un coquin, vat you call sly dogs, zat commandant mine. Tink you zat he vaits letters from zee Consul General? Bosh! Believe you zat he attends zee coming here of L'Alouette, zee Lark? Hombogs! Zere is von lark of annodder plumage zat he 'atches in zee 'ouse of Smit, and before long times now, zee lark will be ready to floy, and—"

"Why, doctor," I interrupt him by saying, "surely you don't mean to hint that your chief is "spoons" upon one of the women-kind in Smith's bungalow, and that he is only biding an opportunity to be off with her?"

"Spoon! vat zou mean 'spoon?' O, I see in luve, éprise, enamelled—pah! enamoured—how I tells! Pardieu for zee me—truly I could nevair be zee 'spoon' viz Mam'selle Marie or vid Mam'selle Elise of Smit, zey are not of my goût—more! 'nemo potest Thetidem simul et Galatea amare,' (he gave the Latin its continental pronunciation, of course; "zou cannot at zee zame time luve zee Thatis and zee Galatea—it is enuf! No; but zee badinage to dismiss, zee captain is not on zee line of spoon, tout au contraire. He arrange vun leetle game; he settle zee ash of your Mistère Tom Jones; he propose to our

Consul at Calcutta zat Jones he wear, nevair, zee uniform consular like zee Vunkerbosches aud zee Zilvas, and zee everybody in zis leetle place ; he advise zee post for Smit ; and presently it vill be outs, and zere vill be a jollie row between zee captain and zee Jones and Smit, or I am not Frenchmans, moi Jules Pilule qui parle. But vait and zee, vait and zee."

"Now to make you comprehend the drift of the talkative doctor's observations, I must let you know that we had living amongst, us the gentleman he has called Jones. He was a merchant on a small scale ; that went for nothing, however, for bar one or two, all our merchants were of the Lilliputian type in business. But Jones, besides being Tom-Thumby, had been strange in his dealings (you will hear something more about this by and by), and we did not care much for him. In his precious long stay in our port, La Tasse had picked up all the gup about every one of us, men, women, and children ; and when Jones applied for a vacant agency to represent France diplomatically and commercially, he put a stopper on the appointment by writing that the prestige and dignity of *la belle patrie* could, he thought, be placed in better and more clever hands. This was what Pilule had alluded to, and the "jollie row" he predicted was to come on, when Jones heard of the Captain's interference. It came, but not quite in the way expected."

"One forenoon, the Major pays me a visit.

"Pringle," says he, "there's a foine hullabaloo up betwane the Frinch Captain and Jones."

"Not a bit more than I thought there would be," say I.

"Be the powers, there is more pluck in that spal-

peen Jones than oi xpicted ; me Oirish blud warums towards him. La Tasse has been wroiting or saying—”

“I know it, Major—”

“And just fancy, me buoy ! Jones has chaalinged Mounseer to foight.”

“Indeed ! ”

“But he won’t mate him. Look here ! Mac has sint me this. Oi can’t make out La Tasse’s jeuced bad fist, and even if oi could, oi can’t speak his voile furren lingo. But you are larned in it, so rade.”

“And he hands me a note, which so far as I can recollect, and make a literal translation of went thus :

“ To Mr.

Mister Jones,

I have received your cartel. I am Captain in the Imperial Navy of France. I have been six times—more—under fire. I wear the cordon of the Legion of Honour. No one dares doubt my courage. So, for me, good ! And now, for you, what are you ? You are merchant of cocoanuts, coir, coffee, and the oil of citronelle ; very respectable business, if respectably pursued ; but we are not on a social equality and consequently I won’t fight.”

“Oi whonder what they’ll be afther now ? ” said O’Leary.

“His Oirish blud, as he called it, was overflowing to see a ‘jewel,’ that was clear enough.

“Leave them alone, Major,” say I, “it will all hush down.”

“But it didn’t.

“When Jones got back the Captain’s letter, he went straight with it to one of our best lawyers—proctors is

the local name—and asked him to take proceedings against La Tasse for defamation of character; but that gentleman declined the case. However, another, not so swell, soon took it up, and filed in the District Court, over which one Duntze, of the forensic bench, was then presiding, an action, '*Jones v La Tasse*', damages laid at several thousand rupees. And Duntze gave it his sign manual, and ordered service. Perhaps he could not help doing that. But it was one thing to order, and another to enforce. La Tasse laughed the judge to scorn; denied, as an alien, his amenability to the civil law as the case stood; insisted that he had but performed his duty to his Government, and said that he would see him, Duntze, 'blowed' before he appeared either in person, or by a solicitor in court. And then he walked about the hot sandy streets before alluded to, buttoned up in uniform and with a big heavy regulation sword dangling at his side. In which guise and with which scimitar he established a wholesome fear, and they let him alone from handling.

"But our Rhadamanthus was not going to be cowed. What was a long sword, a dozen long swords, to him, in comparison to the strong arm of the Law? Not a doit. He issued some sort of a legal document—the name of which I can't tell you, for I don't know, but call it a writ—citing La Tasse before him for contempt of court, and he consigned it for operation to the hands of a subordinate functionary, designated a Deputy Fiscal in the present instance—a miserably poor specimen of a Eurasian, old and worn out, and literally and metaphorically without a leg to stand on.

"Furnished with the mittimus, and in a mortal funk, this effete myrmidon of justice, accompanied by a half a dozen or so of individuals called peons—semi-

garmentless, but gay-belt-adorned nigger constables—embarked in a boat, and were rowed towards Le Falcon. What for? Why, from under her battery, and from the cutlasses of some three hundred men, to drag ashore the Captain. Could anything more out-Herod Herod than this absurdity? But, indeed, so it was planned.

“ And here, not having myself witnessed the scene, I must have recourse to friend Pill’s account as he subsequently described it ; but I will not inflict his rickety broken English upon your ears.

“ When,” said he, “ the shore-boat with the half-caste and his naked black bailiffs touched our ship’s side, although we did not bear a hand in helping them up, no opposition was offered to their boarding us. They scrambled over the hammock-nettings, and came sprawling on to the deck. Sorel, the lieutenant of the watch, asked them who and what they wanted ; but as, you know, he does not speak a word of English, and not one of the incomers knew a syllable of French, all that was intelligible was, ‘ Captain! captain! ’ But Dобрée, a mid, seeing that the hybrid gentleman in command had entirely omitted either to take off or even to touch his hat in respect to our quarter-deck—as, of course, is O.K.—sidles up, gently lifts it from his head, and, with a bow that would have done him service in a Paris ball-room with a reigning belle, presents it to him again, saying, ‘ M’sieur, votre horriblement vieux chapeau.’ Upon this up went the hands of the peons mechanically to their skulls ; but as the only covering they boasted of in that locality was their long, black, greased hair, gathered into a knot, and fastened with a high comb like a woman’s, down dropped the paws again. It would not make a bad picture, Pringle, that

scene on Le Falcon : her deck crowded with grinning sailors, Sorel standing stiff and starched before the group, Dobrée gracefully tendering the half-starved Eurasian his ‘shocking bad hat,’ and he and his niggers looking flabbergasted and awfully funky. Why not send it to your *Ponch* or other comic journal ?”

“ Meantime De la Tasse, who was below, hearing an unusual commotion, comes up, and inquires what the blank, blank is the blank row. My Captain, so oily-tongued with you on shore, is given to hot vinegar language with us on board, believe me.

“ In answer to his question, Sorel says, ‘ men from the shore asking for you, sir.’

“ ‘ For me—me ! What the—’ (I omit the expressive adjective and noun), ‘ do they want with me ? ’

“ ‘ Here, sir, is the principal ; he will tell you.’ And he presents the Fiscal, whose teeth are chattering, whose knees are knocking together, and whose trembling fingers can hardly hold a slip of paper he has in them, beginning, ‘ Victoria, by the grace of God, Queen,’ &c.

“ Then the poor scared devil, stammering out his mission, says that he is sent—O indeed, so much against his will ! but ‘ What can do, sir—what can do ? ’—to convey ashore—quietly if feasible, if not, then by *force*—Hippolyte Achille Hector de la Tasse de Sèvres, and to conduct him into the presence of his honour, Duntze, the judge.

“ La Tasse, who, as you are aware, is almost Englishless, can’t understand six words that are being addressed to him, and is just turning upon me to interpret, when that unfortunate monosyllable *force* is slipped out, strikes his ear, and leads him at once to a right conclusion. He turns purple with rage.

"*Force! force!* you dare to say *force* to a Captain of the Navy of France on his own ship—to a *decoré* like this (pointing to the ribbons on his breast)! *Force* from such *canaille*, such naked rapscallions as you! Sound the *générale!* Beat to quarters! Run in and double-shot the guns! All hands away to repel boarders! *Mes enfants, mes braves*, swamp that boat alongside! Pitch those slaves of perfide Albion into the sea! *Force! Mon Dieu! mille tonnerres! ventreblue! sa-c-r-e!*" and he tore up and down the deck like a raving maniac. *Ma foi*, he had cause to feel insulted, but not to make an ass of himself.

"At the roll of the drum away scamper our fellows helter-skelter to their posts, most of them not knowing what was up. For a moment or two there reigns an unusual undisciplined confusion on the deck, in the midst of which I see the *teterrima causa belli*, the Fiscal, cowering under the lee bulwarks, and—but don't mention it—I whisper to him, 'Be off, or you'll catch it hard;' and, indeed, I help him to wriggle through a port and to drop into his boat. Poor effete old man, it was not his fault, this 'boystrous battaile-makeing.' When the hubbub ceases and they come to look for him, behold, there he is, pulling like grim death for the beach! But in regard to the niggers, neither I nor any one else is disposed to interfere with them, nor to cheat our 'Jacks' out of a bit of a spree; we know they won't hurt them, and they don't. But they set to work to handle them rather roughly, nevertheless. They hustle and bustle them from bow to stern, from port to starboard; they shoulder them now here, now there; they play at all manner of sailor's horse-play with them, but they are careful not to leave so much as a scratch upon one of their unctuous odorif-

erous skins. Then some officer calls out, ‘It is enough! Out of the ship with the beggars!’ Upon which half a score of our A.B.’s get hold of each *malheureux*, and lift him clear of the bulwarks. They swing him see-saw, see-saw, backwards and forwards —alors! ‘one, two, three, and overboard!’ Splash, splash, splash; the six, eight ‘bobbies’ are in the sea, spluttering, shaking their heads, and making for the nearest ships. Bless you, these natives are as much at home in the water as out of it, and all they suffered from is a salt-water bath, which they greatly needed.’

“Thus much the doctor told us, but more that occurred under our eyes yet remains to be said.

“When Duntze saw his satellites return panic-struck and soaked, and knew that his fiat had been set at naught and despised, his ‘dander riz awful,’ to make use of a Yankee vulgarism. He was determined more than ever now to be up and doing; no Johnny Crapeau should get the better of him, not if he knew it. With which determination he interviewed the Major.

“‘O’Leary,’ said he, ‘the majesty of the law has been outraged. It must be upheld; if the civil power is weak to do so, the military must aid; that is good law everywhere. Captain de la Tasse de Sèvres defames one of our most respectable European citizens—’

“‘Be the powers that’s new to me!’ says O’Leary.

“‘An action is entered against him in my court. He objects to plead; I cite him; he refuses to come; and when I send my deputy De Voose and half a dozen peons on board his ship to seize—’

“‘You don’t mane to stand there, Duntze, and tell me you thried to saize him?’

"‘ He defied one and all, pitched my warrant into the sea, and sent the law officers flying after it.’

"‘ Well, anything more?’

"‘ And now I want you to support justice with the sword, to let me have an escort—say Pringle and a few files of soldiers—to go back to Le Falcon and frighten the fellow ashore.’

"‘ Hivenly powers be gracious to me!’ said O’Leary perfectly dumbfounded. ‘ Oi’ll be plane enuf now wid you, Duntze. For a wake-moinded silly man oi always tuk you; but for a bhorn tomfool never, until this blessid minute! Put that in your poipe and smoke it; if it don’t agray wid you, you know where to foinde me. What! give you my men to make a reedeeulous demonstrashun wid? to baird a man-o’-war’s-man in his own ship? to break the *intint cordial* for a palthry tuppeny-hapenny action in that thrumpery coort o’ yours! Oi’ll say you dashed, dashed ever so many dashes first! Hi, orderly! Carolus! Hassan! don’t you hare me? Show this gngleman the dure. The top o’ the mornin’ to ye, Mhister Duntze.’

"‘ And now I’ll end my story in a few words. La Tasse, still furious, moved his ship that very day from the Harbour to the outer anchorage, where he remained until the Government of the colony made him the *amende honorable* for their legal official’s imbecility. Then he up anchor, was off, and we never saw him more.’

"‘ But a wigging loud and long recoiled on the head of Duntze, and he was translated sharp from our station into the jungle. I wonder if he ever got out of it, and what has become of him?’ ”

THE BELLE OF SANTA CRUZ.

A “SCRIMMAGE” AT TENERIFFE.

HOW came it to pass that Teddy O’Grady and I, subalterns both in her Majesty’s Dashers, stationed at Cape Town, found ourselves one November morning, in the year 184—, walking across the grand square of the city of Santa Cruz, Teneriffe, instead of being on the high seas, crowding all sail southward ho for Table Bay ?

It occurred in this wise.

About three weeks before, we, with other passengers, had embarked at Gravesend on board the good ship *Lady Floriline*, John Forteith commander. A succession of heavy autumnal gales, during which her ladyship had behaved very badly, pitching and tossing, kicking and plunging, reeling and staggering, had driven us so much out of our course as to place us on a dark, dirty, and worse than ever stormy night, about one hundred miles to the northward of the Canary Islands.

Non sine lacrymis—not without *tares*, as O’Grady worded it—had we got even so far; for yards had been carried away, sails split and blown from bolt-ropes, cordage snapped, bulwarks stove in, the cutter lost, and dear old Forteith had been awfully riled, and had

angrily desired Howard and Adams of the Rifles "to stow all that chaff" when asked "how many chips" of his Lady Floriline he expected to be left standing when he sighted the Cape lighthouse.

Indeed, matters did look as if little or nothing of the vessel was destined to enter Table Bay; for, on the night I have mentioned, and while a regular hurricane was blowing, something or other aloft gave way, her ladyship "broached to," took a header down to the very bottom of Davy Jones's locker, remained for a moment or two buried in that maritime locality, then rose up with her bowsprit broken and dangling about her stern, and the *décollété* female figure, glass and tooth-brush in hand, which represented the damsel after whom she had been named, swept from her bows and gone to grace the statue gallery of some sea-god.

A little while, thus tattered and torn, she hesitates what next acrobatic feat to perform. Then—w-h-i-s-h! s-p-l-a-s-h!—she makes another plunge fathoms below the waves; crack! over topples the foremast; snap! away goes the maintopmast, and presently every yard, sail, and rope stretched on these spars is either thrashing and lashing alongside, or madly swinging and swaying overhead. Well, we had to work with a will all that livelong night to cut the wreck adrift; and when the last strand was severed, and the carpenter reported that hull and rudder were "as sound as a bell," we set about rigging jurymasts, and shaped a course for Teneriffe. After some days of watchful "conning," of gingerly "pulling and hauling," of careful minding "of luffs and weather-helms," and of keeping of ever so many "bright looks-out,"—for we were wonderfully and curiously fashioned, and Lady F.'s impromptu sea toilet would not stand much rough handling—we

wriggled, one fore-noon, into the lovely roadstead of Santa Cruz, and anchored opposite the old historic town. Then, as soon as Don Fernando de Castoroilo, the health officer, had given us *pratique*, O'Grady and I were over the ship's side, had landed at the Mole, and as I began by saying, were walking across the square on our way to Dickson's hotel.

Not many minutes did it take us to find that comfortable caravanserai, still less to get established in its *salle-à-manger*, and in a composite language of Latin, French, and Irish—O'Grady's native tongue—to give our orders for ollas, pucheros—all sorts and descriptions of Spanish dishes—to an olive-complexioned buxom *dame-de-comptoir*; but who, alas, even across a pretty wide buffet, was at once accredited with the perfume of garlic and tobacco.

Now, as Captain Forteith had told us that his carpenter and half-a-dozen lubberly shipwrights he had got would take fully three weeks to make the Lady Floriline shipshape and ready again for sea, there was nothing to be done for that time but to make ourselves at home in Santa Cruz; to lionise the island; to ascend its peak; to see its vine and olive yards; to visit its old cities of the Guanches; and to fraternise—as much as they would let us—with the cloaked and sombreroed senors, and with the bewitching mantilla-draped, head-veiled, and fan-armed señoritas—the lords and ladies of the land.

And a piquant attractive set were the feminines generally, walking with a springy Oaks-filly kind of step, such as they say no women but Spanish move with, and throwing about their eyes and fans in a way that no other daughters of Eve can, or do, rival them—so much the better, perhaps.

They'll tell you, these Castilian dames and damsels, that from earliest days of childhood anxious mamma has taught them to amble thus in their gait; has shown them how to open and shut and whirl and twirl their fans, making these pieces of stick and painted paper organs of speech and organs of sight; and that when they have mastered these accomplishments, and learnt to sing love-songs to the strumming of a ribbon-decked guitar, then the educational course of Dolores, Juanita, or Christobel is completed, and that she may "go in and win." Add, however, to the curriculum the smoking of cigarettes, the drinking of over-sweet spice-flavoured chocolate, and the rather too free indulgence in pungent esculents—ugh!—and we found the young lady perfect.

However, spite of non-aromatic herbs and strong nicotine, we managed to hit it off pleasantly enough with the pretty *senoras* and *senoritas*, who took kindly to "los oficiales Ingleses," possibly as a pleasant change from their every-day stereotyped admirers. But the *dons* and *hidalgos*—their male belongings—hated the very sight of us; and although assuring us, after the manner of the country, that their houses and contents were at our disposal, that they hoped we might live a thousand years, and so on, were wishing us all the time at Jericho, in the Red Sea, anywhere rather than parading the streets and strands of Santa Cruz, and lounging in the saloons and gardens of their large *moresco*-looking, but somewhat dilapidated houses—Dolores, Christobel, or Juanita aforesaid being then and there our companions.

"Be jabus," says O'Grady one day, "a moightly proud set of spalpeens these oisland *dons*, but as poor as a Dooblin keyarman. Why, look ye, there's that

Don Pedro de Povero Diabolo, the man we see wid eight or noine paces of ribbun tacked on his coat, the Intendente Militario they call him, the husband, ye moinde, of that noice leetle senora you've now and agen sain me walking on the Meerena wid. Whoy, the beggar has ounly four or foive doubloons the month, a mather of some twelve or fifteen pounds ; and as for the casa (house) which he is always putting *a la disposition de ustedes*—at our deesposal—bedad ! tree auld cheers, a squeer table, a sleep of keyarpet on a polished flure, and hoigh-back rickety sofa of the toime of Coloombus, and on which Inez and he can't seet widout squazing ; begorrah, that's all, or nearly all, the foorniture oive sain in the house for use or show."

Now this Don Pedro to whom O'Grady alluded was no end of a Teneriffe swell, his impecuniosity notwithstanding. He was a knight of Saint Fernando, of Isabella, of Calatrava, of goodness only knows what besides ; he had the blue blood of Castille's best grandees circulating in his veins ; and although past the sixties in age, and well into "the sere and yellow leaf," was as frisky and peppery as the youngest sub in the King of Spain's army. *Au reste* he was a wizened, sapless, tobacco-dried-up old soldier, of whom you never saw more than his forage-cap, thin, colourless face, and his boots, the rest of his person being always enveloped in his large military regulation cloak. Inez, his wife—the blooming May to this faded December—was about twenty, slight, graceful, fairer than most of her countrywomen, with large, black, sparkling eyes, a rosy laughing mouth, pearly teeth (Havanas notwithstanding), and a glorious profusion of glossy jet hair crowning a head which no other coif than a lace veil, fastened by a high tortoise-shell comb was ever per-

mitted to cover. Admittedly she was the belle and beauty of Santa Cruz—for even that spiteful old haridan Donna Isabella de Muchos Malos Palabres said so—and the pet name she went by was La Hermosa, Inez the Beautiful. There were eyes and eyes, and there were fans and fans, in the city and suburbs of that island ; but Inez distanced all her skilled compeers in the use and abuse of both. When she sent a bright sidelong glance out of those large flashing optics, let a word or two fall from those ruby lips, dimpled that lovely face of hers with an arch smile, and waved and whirled, furled and unfurled, the air-producing little whirligig she held in her jewelled hand—pop ! bang ! —down dropped the spoil at which this mitrailleuse of artillery had been directed, as if it had been knocked over by a Martini-Henry rifle. Howard, Adams, your humble servant, all of us were more or less hurt by random shots ; but dear old Teddy O'Grady, he felt them hottest and hardest ; and La Hermosa, knowing this, kept on firing and firing without mercy, and riddled him to pieces. So down he fell ; and being a hot and impetuous Galway man, it was as much as I could do to keep him from getting foul of old Pedro; hurling him over the precipices of the “pake,” pitching him into the “say,” “spiflicating the villen,” and in point of fact from committing some threatened act of violence that would rid him of the Intendente, and leave his wife a “widder.” He was “clane gone anent that colleen,” he said. “The left soide of my body is as wake as wather-ghruel,” he sung ; and he vowed “he'd be the death of the ‘pra Adamite’ husband—auld Meetoosalah Pedro—he would !”

But notwithstanding these menaces the Don walked in peace, and took matters very quietly. He did not

appear to notice O'Grady's predilections, or to dispute his pretty *cara sposa*'s right to an open flirtation ; "they all do it," so why not his better-half ? He still puffed away at his principes and regalias, still smothered himself in his roquelaure, still treated my friend with the greatest politeness and courtesy, and was still always placing the "tree old cheers" and "the sleep of keyarpet" at his service.

Well, one night there was a *fête* at the palace of the Governor, El Conde de Pocos Pesos. His excellency gave us lots of good music from the military bands of the garrison ; lots of brilliant light from his country-pressed oil ; lots of grapes, oranges, dates, and figs from the gardens hard by ; lots of sour Canary wine : but little—precious little—in the way of substantial meats and drinks. It could not be called a ruinous entertainment, and probably cost the Count three or four dollars good and lawful coin of Spain. We soon got wearied of the whole affair, O'Grady especially ; for although Don Pedro, without the everlasting capote, splendacious in all the bravery of his best uniform and multitudinous stars and crosses, was well to the front, Inez the Beautiful did not show. Fandangos, boleros, cachuchas, waltzes, had no charm for him,—O'Grady of course I mean. He passed by flashing eyes without a glance at their lustre. He disregarded the *buenas noches*, and other polite salutations of many a fascinating maid. He ruthlessly crushed against dainty, natural and artificial feminine configurations without regard to disarrangement or physical suffering. He scratched with the heavy bullion of his epaulettes the nude arms and shoulders of delicately cuticled brunettes without a word of apologetic sorrow ; and he dug his spurred heels—he was our adjutant—into the skirts and shapely

ankles of matrons and maids, and tore flounces and flesh without so much as asking pardon for the injuries. More than all, he aroused the indignation of Madam the Countess of Pocos Pesos—the great captain's captain—by leaving untasted the fruit and acid vintage of her banquet, anathematising the whole turnout as “a deuced rotten Barmacoidé faste.” He was “out of soorts,” he said; “complately down on his luck;” and he’d “be off and take a moonlight stroll on the *bache*.” But instead of walking towards the *bache*, I see him follow the road to the Calle de la Reyna—Queen Street—in which my lady Inez lives.

“That’s not the way to the Atlantic, old man!” I shout after him.

“You be smothered!” he replies, goes on, and I turn towards mine inn.

But scarcely am I settled to my whisky and cigar, when in rushes O’Grady, pale and agitated. He seizes my tumbler, and drains it at a draught.

“In the name of goodness,” I say, “what’s up? Where have you been? what on earth have you been doing?”

“Doing! look here!” and stripping off his coat he shows me a wound through the fleshy part of his left arm, which had saturated his sleeve with blood, and from which the gore was still oozing.

“Great Heavens!” I exclaim, “how’s this? What row have you been in? Who has wounded you after this fashion?”

“Don’t be after making a fuss, Tim,” he says, “it’s nothing—nothing to what oi gave Carlos de Garrido, leeftenant of artillery stationed here,—ye know the baste,—and who, belave me, won’t be able to show on parade wid his guns for a month to come. Oi didn’t go

to the say, as ye know. Oi went to have a quiet chat and a dish of tay wid Inez, wid the Señora Povero Diablo. Oi mane oi'd frrequently been before, and oi fancy me prisence was welcome. Well, the tay, or rather some voile chocolate, had been sarved, and oi was telling me lady in me best Spanish of Pocos Pesos' *fate*,—whew! —from the Powers ounly knows where, Carlos de Garrido tares into the room, blurts out a word or two oi don't understand, then draws a stiletto, and widout By your lief, or Wid your lief, dales me a prod, the coward! Faith, he staggered me a bit; but oi was on my pins in a jiffey. Oi wrenched the wapon from his hand, and letting drive—one, two—right from the shoulder, hit full into his face, reeled him over, and oi think that oi have irremadiably damaged his big Rooman nose, and deesposed of two or tree of those tobacco-doyed teet of his down his ugly troat. Inez scramed, clung to me arum, intrated me to spare her coozen—maybe he was her coozen, though the family loikeness isn't strong—and then fainted away. Oi left her loying sinseless in one corner of the flure, Garrido blading in another, and here oi am: Sind for some more dhrink, Tim; for oi'm hated and favered, and thin we'll be talking the mather over in pace."

Betimes next day in walks Don Pedro to Dickson's, and seeks an interview with O'Grady. The old caballero is more polite than ever; he bows and scrapes; figuratively he kisses Teddy's hands and feet; assures him of his exalted estimation; and ends by requesting the honour of crossing swords with him that evening in the gardens at the end of the town. He adds that he must vindicate the honour of his house, and keep from scandal his young wife's reputation. He has evidently got hold of the wrong end of the story, for he makes

no allusion to the artillery cousin, nor to the dagger-stab still smarting and paining the man he is addressing ; he merely, over and over again, insists on fighting. O'Grady tells him that he has not the least objection to fight ; indeed, as an Irishman, he is rather given that way ; but that upon much the same principle that he would not marry a woman old enough to be his grandmother, he'd as lief not fight a gentleman of sufficient years to be his grandfather, and which Don Pedro certainly is. Upon which the Don's blood is more up than ever. He says that he is juvenility itself ; that his feelings are young, if indeed his age is advancing ; that he belongs to the best of nobility ; and that no Spaniard, from the Cid down to Espartero, was ever too old for the duello. Fight he must, and fight he will.

" Bay it so," says O'Grady ; " oi'm your man, and by the poiper that played beforre Mowses, look out for squalls, for oi'll tache you

" what pirils do environ
The man that meedles wid cauld iron."

Adios, viva usted con Dios, as ye yoursels say in these paarts."

So the meeting was settled ; and at sundown O'Grady and I, with Castoroilo, the doctor, in attendance, sneak into the gardens as quietly as possible. But imagine our astonishment, when we had been trying to keep the matter dark, to find half of the *élite* of Santa Cruz drawn together to witness the passage of arms between their Intendente and the English officer. Yes ; on the walks and plats there were the men smoking and lounging ; in the sumner-houses and pavilions there were the women prying and peeping, tricked out, all in their best go-to-bull-fights finery, and all " nods and becks and wreathed smiles." There they were, giggling

and flirting, eating ices, drinking chocolate, and making an outing and a holiday of the whole business. Likely enough they looked upon Pedro and O'Grady as a couple of matadors brought into the ring for an encounter with an Andalusian bull.

Soon the Don comes on the field. He divests himself of his cloak and military tunic, and in his shirt sleeves and tight pantaloons looks like the driest of dried Guanche mummies in the city of Laguna hard by. He does not seem to have an inch of solid flesh into which O'Grady's small-sword could be driven, nor a single drop of that blue blood he is always boasting about to be set free from his shrivelled veins.

The two men—the one so old and time-worn, the other so young and world-fresh—take post opposite each other, and well-tried Toledo blades are placed in their hands. They salute and put themselves “on guard.”

At the very first exchange of “feints” I see that the plucky old Don is an adept swordsman; he handles his weapon with so much grace and delicacy. O'Grady is less polished and attractive with his sword, but I know him to be no mean fencer—that he has a quick eye, an iron wrist, strength and agility to counterbalance his opponent’s superiority. The odds—and I daresay those ladies were making bets in Havana cigars, Paris gloves, and bonbons with their attendant cavaliers—were therefore to my mind in favour of my principal.

The attack begins.

Clink, clink, clink, clink. The swords ring one against the other. Point and parry, parry and point, are rapidly and dexterously exchanged. Clink, clink, clink, clink. The blades are disengaged while each man pauses for an instant to take breath.

Presently the combat is resumed. Clink, clink, clash, clash, clink. A lunge might and main from the Don, an incomplete faulty guard by O'Grady, and he gets pricked, hardly more, in the forearm.

"Bueno, bueno!" the lookers-on shout, and clap their hands, just as if they were applauding a neat hit or catch at a cricket-match.

Again the swords are crossed.

Clink, clink, clash, clash, clink, clash, g-u-r-r-h, as one iron scrapes against the other. Ah, O'Grady's point has made a very decided, but not deep, puncture in what little there is of the Intendente's deltoid.

"Basta, basta, basta! It is enough," we all exclaim; "it is enough! Blood has been spilt on both sides. It is enough, Don Pedro; enough, O'Grady!"

"Oi'm quite contint," calls out Teddy, dropping his rapier.

"*Para mi! non soy!*—I'm not satisfied!" spits out his antagonist. He is livid with rage, smarting with pain, and wants *mucho mas sangre*—much more blood.

So, spite of our endeavours and protestations, at it they go again; but not for long; for, whether from fatigue or mischance we know not, the Don makes a fatal error—exposes his defence; O'Grady sees it, lunges like lightning and with terrible force. Ah, *maldita, carramba!* His blade transfixes his enemy somewhere about the seventh rib.

He staggers, and falls back on the turf; the men crowd up; the women scream; Fernando de Castoroilo examines the wound, shakes his head, and sends off to apprise Inez of her chance of widowhood, who, we hear subsequently, receives the news with a pleasant, hopeful smile.

Then the aguazils—the Santa Cruz “bobbies”—who had been dodging about behind the orange and olive-trees, and had not attempted to interfere before, move up, and “run us both in.”

Next morning we are taken before the Alcade—the beak—and examined; but as the fight is declared on all sides to have been strictly on the square, entirely in accordance with the laws of Spanish honour, and moreover as very many of the worthy Santacruzians are waiting impatiently for old Pedro’s official and marital dead man’s shoes, why the worshipful magistrate lets us off with a fine, and an injunction to clear out of the city *ventre à terre*. So for a few days we rusticate in the grass-grown streets of Laguna; then once more embark on board the Floriline, set sail alow and aloft, and turn our backs on Inez, Pedro, Pocos Pesos, Garrido, and the whole “biling.”

Years passed away. O’Grady, poor fellow, had been killed in the Caffre wars, and I had returned to England.

Shopping one day in Regent Street, my attention was attracted to a lady’s voice asking, in a foreign accent, for some “silk of Lyons” and some “gloves of Paris.” Turning round, and glancing under a fashionable bonnet, who should I see but our old friend Inez of Teneriffe, looking more matronly, but as fascinating and pretty as ever? We entered at once into conversation. She told me that Don Pedro recovered from his wound, and after plaguing her for “two, tree years” with a churchyard cough, which the doctors were not obliging and gallant enough to permit to run its own rapid course, but were always patching up with “oil of codfeeshe,” had at last “gone out,” the saints be-

praised! That—*si, certamente!*—she was married again, was now the wife of El Colonel Carlos de Garrido, with a lapful of children, and with the same flash of the sparkling eyes that had bowled over Teddy on the Marina of Santa Cruz—“*todavia a la disposicion de usted, señor*—entirely at your service, sir.”

OUR COLONEL'S STORY;

OR, A SLIP 'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP.

YOU all knew Sandy McPherson?" said our Colonel.

"Intimately!" "Perfectly!" "As well as my own brother, sir!" most of us replied, though, if the truth be told, there was not a man at that mess-table who had ever heard of Mr. McPherson before. You see, it was the commanding officer who spoke, and it was always risky saying him nay when he expected yea.

"They used to call him, you recollect, 'The Great Unwashed;' a vulgar but appropriate *sobriquet*, nevertheless," continued the chief. "Great, on account of his burly and preciously ugly person; unwashed by reason of his accredited scant acquaintance with brown windsor, spring-water, and the functions of the *dhirzees* and *dhobies*, i.e. tailors and washermen of the land.

"On his coffee estate in the mountains, and among his undraped and unscrubbed coolies, this disregard for the comforts and conveniences of life went for nothing, perhaps it was even in keeping with the surroundings; but when he came down to this city, walked into its public gardens and esplanade, or showed with its swells at the band, his appearance was something too outrageous, and his brother K.C.B.s, meaning Knights of

the Coffee Berry, and not, as you might suppose, of the Order of the Bath, dressy men hereabouts, whatever else they are on their plantations, cast him completely into the shade by their get-up and gorgeousness.

"As for the spinsters and young widows of the station, by 'Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, virorum,' as Colonel Damas in the play puts it, there was scarce one but who fought shy of admitting him in her presence as a morning visitor, much less as a suitor, though many of these blooming ladies were on the sharp look-out for the silken chains of matrimony, and Barkis—that is to say, McPherson—was, as they knew, willing.

"But, disadvantages of person and attire notwithstanding, he was a right good fellow, this same gentleman. He was honest, hard-working, thrifty, simple-minded ; and from being a mere adventurer without interest, friends, or money, he had, self-helped only, saved up the bawbees little by little ; had bought patch after patch, acre after acre, of virgin land ; cut down its timber, cleared it, planted it ; and now he had squatted down free from encumbrances on Ailsa Craig, as he called his property, as pretty and as fruitful a small coffee estate as could be found in one of the most picturesque districts of this lovely island.

"I wish that I could give you even a faint idea of the exquisite beauty of its scenery, as it stood on a range of lofty hills looking out on still higher mountains, clothed to their very summits with hoary forest-trees. I wish I could paint that mighty waterfall, almost beside the house, as it came rushing and tearing over beds and boulders of rock, tumbling with an incessant roar into a foaming river below. I would I were able to picture the slopes green with scented grass, the fields white at one season with the snowy

blossoms, and at another red with the ripening fruit of the coffee-bushes, the towering crags glowing with bright tropical flowers, and the steep declivities verdant to their very bases with ferns and lichens. I can't do it, boys, and I won't try. All that I want to let you know is, that it was a deuced nice sort of a place, this habitat of the McPherson; and that to be settled there with one's household gods, and coffee selling at seventy or eighty shillings per hundredweight in the market, would pay a precious deal better than does her most gracious Majesty—God bless her!—and the command of this dear old corps with its unruly subs.

“ So, no doubt, too, thought its owner as he lolled and smoked at his cottage-front and gazed at the silver bloom, or the ruddy cherries of his trees growing almost up to the very door. But it was a poor, ungarnished, comfortless, higgledy-piggledy sort of a homestead that same dwelling-house; for, whatever else friend Sandy had done towards the beautifying and fertilising of his land, his roof-tree, like his wardrobe, had been utterly neglected. Both wanted just exactly what he thought they did—the wife element to set them ship-shape and presentable; and, as you have heard before, for that desideratum he was on the *qui vive*.

“ Now, you young gentlemen, who are in the habit of lawn-tennis, afternoon teaing, talking, spooning, walking, driving, with all the feminines, plain and coloured, of this place, and who think that you have only to ask and be received,— which I beg and entreat you will not put to the test, cutting up the mess and so on, can't perhaps realise to yourselves the difficulties the worthy I am speaking of had met with in even this overstocked matrimonial emporium. The Angle-fralls, the Hunters, the Hookers, lots of girls whom I

will not name, had snubbed or turned up their noses at him when he came a-wooing ; and so, *nolens volens*, he remained a bachelor, anathematising his ill-luck, and venting his disappointments upon the backs of shirking and recusant Tamil coolies, the recognised natural enemies of coffee and the scapegoats of its cultivators.

“ Then as a last resource he sought, from his brethren of the berry around, counsel as to the most advisable method of getting the so-needed helpmate ; and the first man he consulted was Herr Thaler, a successful and rich German whose estate bordered on Ailsa Craig.

“ ‘ So, so ! ’ said that personage. ‘ Zere is noting more easy. Zave of zat ragget beard, burn in ze fire zose old clodes not fit for ’Oundsdtich or any Juden Strasse, buy von big tob, mein frend, get zome Europe-muster coats, and zen return to ze fräuleins and vidder-fraus vid ze monish-bags in ze ’ands. If zey vill not ’ave zou, zey vill take ze rupee ; trost em for zat, my zon.’ ”

“ But the recommendation was unpalatable, and to a great extent impracticable, so another *fidus Achates* was appealed to, one Jack le Geste, a man much addicted to chaff and practical joking.

“ ‘ In this land of pearls and precious stones, no go, dear boy,’ said Mr. le G. ‘ From Dondra Head to Point Calamere—north, south, east, west—the women won’t look at you ; that you have found out long ago. Give up hunting, then, in these oft-trod colonial fields, and draw the home covers. Don’t you happen to know any bonny lassie in your own “ Caledonia stern and wild,” or a pretty colleen in the oisle of shillelahs and shamrocks, who would be glad to share curry and rice with you ? Go and try those parts ; if not, have a

haphazard shy at where I hail from, the Channel Islands. Spins—ay, and precious good-looking ones too—are as plentiful there as cocoa-nuts are here, and maybe one of them might be induced to clear out in your favour. Failing those islets, I know of no other dodge than indenting upon one of those co-operative associations which furnish everything, even to a better half. But mind, old man, they keep a roster for foreign service in their offices : first lady on the list, plain or pretty, first for duty ; you pays your money, but you don't take your choice.'

"But these suggestions also were considered infeasible, and put aside. Presently, however, a thought struck McPherson.

"'Le Geste,' said he, 'when I was a boy there lived in the neighbourhood of my father's manse a widowed lady with two or three then wee, very wee, daughters. From what I can recollect of them their means were cramped, not to say scanty, but they were of good blood and form. One of the children, the eldest if my memory serves me, was called Effie—Effie Needum, and promised to be bonny, for I can faintly recall her blue eyes, flaxen hair, rosy complexion, and jimp little figure. If she be alive she must be close on thirty ; for it is many years since I came out here a stripling, and was Chinna Doray [*Anglicè*, little master] on the Paycock estate, as my kind employer styled that property. Mrs. Needum knew me well—better, indeed, than I knew her. I wonder if she and the bairns be in the land of the leal or the living.'

"'Write indirectly and inquire.'

"And Sandy did so, and ascertained that his old acquaintances, Miss Effie included, were still alive, and proudly bearing up against the *res angusta domi*.

Armed with which intelligence he once again returned to Le Geste.

" 'It is all right now, Mac,' said he ; 'your course is as clear as day. Send a "chit" to mater-familias N. ; tell her that you are well-to-do in the world, own lands and cattle, men-servants and maid-servants ; that you want to settle ; that as a whipper-snapper you liked—no, better say loved—Miss Effie, and ask her in plain English to come out and marry you. Above all things, though, be sure and send your photograph ; you are not such a very, very bad-looking chap, Sandy, if you would only dress like a Christian, and not like a coolie.'

" So the letter was written, submitted to Le Geste's inspection, sealing, posting, and in due course was received by the Needums, in whose little household it created no small amount of astonishment, and was much spelt and pondered over, especially by the damsel most concerned—still a comely if even a somewhat *passé* body—and who, after a while, consented to go out and wed her suitor.

" 'After all, mother dear,' she, said, 'he has house and home for me ; maybe, by and by, for you too, Jennie ; and I'll do all I can to help you. It's the best thing for me. And really Mr. McPherson—or I suppose I ought to call him Alexander—is yet young and not bad-looking. Quite the contrary—very, very nice-looking ; see the photo he has sent us.'

" And Miss Jennie quite agreed with her elder sister that Mr. McPherson was a beauty.

" 'Well, my bairns,' said the old lady, 'I can't gainsay you but that the portrait is winsome and donce enough ; but as call I to mind the boy Sandy, the son of the minister, he was not nearly so seemly and well favoured. But it is, indeed, lang syne since I set eyes

on him, and likely he has got handsomer as he got older; some men do.'

"Then everything being settled, Miss Needum accepted her kismet, agreed to go out, and her lover—open-handed, honourable, true, as I have already told you he was—sent the wherewithal for passage and outfit.

"And pending the many, many weeks that elapsed, and while the good ship Queen of Serendib was sailing round the Cape for her destination, a change, a radical change, caine over the life and habits of our bride-expecting friend. He cast into the limbo of things done with his coarse 'cumlies,' rough 'dungarees,' and other country clothing, and burst out into 'Europemuster' linen, tweeds, and serges. He purchased largely house furniture and nicknacks; he bought a lady's horse and a Peat's side-saddle; he whose equine proclivities had never extended beyond a shaggy mountain pony, and a tattered and torn pigskin. He told his old flames and chums that he was going in for the Benedict, and bashfully listened to the 'riles' and jeers of the one, and the chaff and laugh of the other.

"But, barring 'The Great Unwashed' himself, no one was more taken aback at the course of events than Tamby, his long-serving 'appoo' or butler. That functionary saw coolie after coolie arrive at Ailsa Craig with load upon load of unknown and unusual goods; and although in the 'Lines,' and other native resorts, he might have expressed his bewilderment, yet in his master's presence he reserved a stolid silence. But when one day a string of 'bandies' (carts) drew up, and from beneath their leaf-covered tilts there were dragged out mats and carpets, sofas, chairs, tables,

what not, then his apparent indifference and his ‘nigger’ tongue could hold out no longer.

“‘ Why master kick up all dis bobberee ? What for he want all dese tings on wattie (estate) ? ’ he inquired.

“‘ A young lady is now on her way from Scotland to marry me, Tamby.’

“‘ Marry ! Doray (master) going take a wife after al dis plenty long time do too well widout ? ’

“‘ Yes ! ’

“‘ Den, master, please, I discharge you, sar. No my custom stop wid lady in bungalow. Master’s missis come, master’s appoo go. Master take choice.’

As the time for the arrival of the Queen of Serendib drew nigh, awful were the fidgets of our hero ; and many days before it was possible for that slow but sure craft to reach her port, he was there walking about with a big binocular in his hands, looking out seawards, and entreating all sorts and conditions of men for the very earliest news of her being sighted. The fact was that the rough seasoned old fellow was on the very tenterhooks of anxiety and expectation, as nervous as a schoolgirl, and behaving himself as such.

“Then at long last it was told him that the vessel was in the offing, was rounding the point, was at anchor in the harbour ; and in the Master Attendant’s boat, cushioned, flagged, and bedecked for the auspicious occasion, Sandy McPherson, Esquire, of Ailsa Craig, planter, rowed alongside ‘ same like he Governor,’ the native spectators observed.

“Scrambling up the side, he took a hasty glance at the many passengers assembled on the poop ; and, instinctively guessing that Miss Effie was not among them, he dived below and confronted the stewardess.

“‘ Miss Needum on board, and well ? ’ asked he.

"‘Yes, sir,’ replied the matron; ‘and a very nice, good, kind, pleasant young lady she is, and I’ve taken the greatest care of her.’ She felt sure that the gent was Miss N.’s husband to be, and that there was money in his purse for a gratuity, notwithstanding that, according to the terms of the passage-money, stewards’ and stewardesses’ fees were included; a fiction, gentlemen, a pleasant fiction, which you will find out when you go down to the sea in ships.

“‘Take this card to her,’ said the pale and trembling gentleman. ‘I’ll wait her coming up in that far corner of this saloon.’

“Glancing at the pasteboard, the woman disappeared; and presently there ascended, step by step, from the regions below, first a neat straw hat, trimmed with bright ribbons, beneath that hat a face somewhat worn with years and cares, but still fresh and comely enough; then a slight compact figure, draped in plain well-fitting garments, shawled, and ready for the shore. Miss Effie, *in propriâ personâ*, stood before her hand-seeker, blushing ‘celestial rosy red.’

“He advanced from his coign of vantage to greet her; but as he drew nigher, instead of the warm affectionate welcome he looked for, there was a fixed stare, a shudder, a hasty retreat, and a loud scream which resounded from stern to stem of the big ship, and brought every one from decks and cabins into the saloon.

“‘Miss Needum—Effie, my dear girl, what on earth is the matter?’ hurriedly stammered out the astounded Sandy.

“‘Shiver my timbers, what ails the lassie?’ put in the captain. ‘Look out for squalls, if you’ve annoyed her!’ And all the bystanders echoed the words in

more or less threatening terms. She was evidently a favourite on board.

“‘O, take him away,’ cried the lady piteously,—‘take him away from me some one ! I don’t know him ! I’ve been misled, deceived ! I can’t marry him—indeed, indeed I can’t ! He is not Mr. McPherson who wrote to me, to whom I came out to be mar—He is so ugly ! O, such a dreadful fright ! I’ll return him his money ! I’ll work my way back to my poor mother ! I’ll do anything, but I can’t be his wife ! I’d rather die first !’

“‘Miss Needum, I don’t indeed understand this,’ said the taken-aback and completely-flabbergasted one. ‘What does it all mean ? Are we not engaged ? Have you not come out of your own free will to accept the home and the love I offer you ? Did I not send you my likeness ?’

“‘No, no !’

“‘Surely I did. It was taken by Collodion, our best photographer ; and when he gave it to me, he said, “Mr. McPherson, sir, there is no flattery ’ere ; your worst *henemies* would admit that.” Why, I myself put it inside the letter to your mother.’

“‘I repeat, no—decidedly and emphatically no ! Look at this,’ and drawing from her bosom a little locket, she opened it, and displayed the head and face of a younger, much handsomer, and in every outward respect a more lovable man than the seared one now before her. *It was the counterfeit presentment of Mr. Jack le Geste*, and I leave you to imagine what McPherson thought when he saw it there.

“How could it get into the locket, you ask ? Why, in the simplest way in the world. That good-for-nothing fellow Le Geste, when Sandy’s letter came into

his possession, thought to ‘sell’ him, and so had surreptitiously removed his *carte de visite*, substituting one of his own, and Effie had worn it ever since.

“The poor deil of a disappointed bridegroom pleaded hard, and tried every argument to induce the girl to let matters progress, but she was obstinate and determined.

“She would esteem and respect him always, but nothing more. To let the cat out of the bag, Miss Effie had fallen most desperately in love with the picture of her supposed Alexander, and in vulgar language had spooned over it awfully during the tedious and lone hours of a long voyage. Of course, she imagined that it was her intended husband she was approving, or she would not have done it—certainly not.

“So, quite chap-fallen, and in the maddest of rages, McPherson returned to his estate.

“Arrived there, he cut from one of his coffee-bushes the thickest and knottiest of sticks, and proceeded with it in search of Le Geste ; but fortunately for the jester he had made tracks and was gone.

“He sought him that night, and he sought him next day,
And he sought him about, till a week passed away ;
In *boutiques*, on ‘wattles,’ in a lone jungle spot,
McPherson sought fiercely, but found Le Geste not.

Very lucky, I repeat, for the undiscoverable one’s bones.

“Then he reverted to his old customs and habits, sold his not now necessary goods and chattels, and thought as little as he could of the false Effie.

“A fickle and capricious creature, woman. Listen, gentlemen, to another exemplification of old Virgil’s dictum.

"In the same ship in which shortly after the breaking off of her intended espousal, Miss Needum sailed for England, there came on board, almost at the last minute, a slim, dark-haired, good-looking man, going home, some said for health; others in fear and trembling of an irate Gael with a huge stick in his hands. Be this as it may, the health-seeker or the fugitive—take which you please—was no other than Le Geste; and to close my story, when the vessel touched at St. Helena for water and provisions, he and Effie went on shore and returned man and wife."

MY SWIM TO THE TARGET.

A STORY OF SHOEBURYNESS.

HEW, perhaps, among the civilian population of England have any very certain idea as to the whereabouts of Shoeburyness; fewer still, perhaps, have been there. To travel down from Fenchurch street to the extreme end of the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway is of itself a journey not to be undertaken without some definite object in view; and when to this is added a tramp of some two miles along yielding sand and shingle, or, as an alternative, about four miles of uninteresting road, it is easy to understand that few tourists are to be found energetic enough to travel so far merely to see the place and return; for stay there they cannot, there being no hotel of any description in the little place.

Shoeburyness then, for the benefit of the uninitiated, may be defined as a "little noisy place near Southend." As to its physical characteristics, it is a heterogeneous collection of barracks, batteries, and sandbanks. To the stranger approaching it, it presents a most uninviting aspect, especially should the tide happen to be out. For then becomes apparent the interminable reaches of sand that stretch away out to sea for miles in their unvarying and dreary flatness, broken only

here and there by the black form of a target or by the pegs driven into the yielding soil to mark the ranges. Nevertheless it is to this very dismal expanse that Shoeburyness owes its importance in military eyes, and which makes it what it is—the great experimental and practice station for the British artillery.

Everything is quiet enough there till eight o'clock or thereabouts. Then the observer sees here and there a flag run up on the summit of a battery or casemate, and the roar of the guns begins and lasts for two or three hours, almost without intermission. Looking out to sea one may perceive clouds of smoke rolling away, far up in the blue sky, like white balls, as the shells burst in the distance, and may hear the noise of the report floating lazily back after an apparently interminable lapse of time. When it is remembered that of the thousands of fuses of all kinds turned out of the Woolwich Arsenal some three per cent have to be proved by actual experiment, one may form some conception of the appearance of Shoeburyness on a busy day.

Enough, however, of description for the present. Even to this remote corner of England has enterprise penetrated, and when last I was there the foundation of a great hotel was being laid. Soon, no doubt, it will be as great a resource for the ubiquitous 'Arry as other portions of her Majesty's dominions. I should not have ventured to intrude it upon my readers but for an adventure which happened to me there on one occasion, and which went very near to depriving the British public of this interesting recital and the Royal Regiment of Artillery of the services of a "most promising young officer," as no doubt the *Times* would have recorded.

In the year 187—I was going through what is technically known as the “long course,” a curriculum of instruction in gunnery theoretical and practical ; the former at Woolwich, and the latter at Shoeburyness—each part lasting six months. We had been enjoying ourselves at our seaside residence for three out of these six months exceedingly : for we had been fortunate enough to have gone there in the summer months : and between boating and bathing and playing lawn-tennis, in a modified form known as “sticky,” in courts constructed out of the boards of old targets past work, the time had passed very pleasantly. It was now August, and a very hot one ; the sun burned in the heavens like a red coal, and scorched up the scanty water that the sandbeds contained, till we had to send miles away to fetch what was required for the use of the barracks. Work of any kind was an effort. One felt inclined to spend the day swimming lazily about, or sitting on a warm rock after the fashion of Tennyson’s merman. It was one of these aquatic excursions which got me into the greatest scrape I have ever been in, or that I ever shall be in, I hope, as the sensation was anything but pleasant.

I must premise that I was a very fair swimmer, having learned that art, amongst many other useful things, at the Academy, and progressed favourably in it during a course of seaside fort residences. My great ambition had always been to swim round the 2000 target some day when the tide was in, and at length I determined to make the attempt. The feat seems easy enough, no doubt, but I was no Captain Webb ; and amongst my fellow-officers there were few who would have attempted it, so I felt rather inclined to be able to say that I had been there. Confiding my inten-

tion to no one, I started one day from the gun-pier just before slack water, counting on getting back before the tide turned again.

It was a hot day, as I have before said, and I swam very slowly; however, I arrived at my destination, without much difficulty. The framework on which the target floated offered a pleasant resting-place, and I lay down on it lazily, intending to take some five minutes' breathing-time, and then strike out for home. But alas for the feebleness of human resolutions! Between the warm sun and the long swim and the recumbent posture, I had not been there two minutes before I was fast asleep. I had a curious dream. I had been reading a rather wild book of speculative astronomy that morning, and had been somewhat struck by the writer's theory that the end of the world would come through the fiery vapours and lava of the interior of the earth breaking through the thin crust thereof. I dreamed now that such a catastrophe was imminent, and that I was calmly inspecting a pressure-gauge to ascertain how long the globe would yet endure. Higher and higher ran the warning hand upon the dial, and at length, with a mighty crash, the world exploded, and I was hurled, not into chaos, but into the water of the estuary of the Thames!

Thoroughly awakened, as the reader may suppose, I rose to the surface, gulping down a mouthful of water swallowed in the surprise. As I clutched the framework beside me, I was conscious of a dazzling red flash like sheet-lightning, followed by a tremendous report and a rattling all about me, as though a shower of hail were falling. I have seen too much of artillery not to know what this astonishing meteor was—a shrapnel shell.

Perhaps there may be some of my readers ignorant of what such a missile is ; for, indeed, it is of somewhat late invention. Let them imagine, then, a cylindrical shell of iron, ogival-headed, and containing as many bullets as it will conveniently hold, comfortably set in a bed of rosin. At the bottom thereof is a small charge of powder, ignited by a time-fuze bored to burn any required time. On this delightful machine exploding out fly the bullets, and, by the inexorable laws of dynamics, partaking of the original motion of the shell, cover the ground before them for hundreds of yards with a *feu d'enfer*, as of a whole regiment firing volleys.

Such an implement of destruction is very well to talk about ; but when its violence is directed against oneself, there is less pleasure in the contemplation. Clearly I had slept so long that the ordinary afternoon practice had begun, and from two guns evidently, or the one shot could not have followed the other so rapidly. Only a few seconds had I for these thoughts ere I saw a red flash leap out from the flag-crowned battery on shore. Instantly I dived deep as I could, and heard, deadened by the water above me, the sharp report of the shell. As I rose to the surface again, I saw white splinters on the wood-work of the target, that showed how true the aim had been. Scarcely had I time to take breath when the red flash leaped again, and again I dived. They were good gun detachments—none better anywhere ; and the guns were light ones—16-pounders. Often had I competed myself in a race with time, running the gun up again almost before the recoil had ceased, and ramming home shot and cartridge ere it had reached its former position again. Now no doubt my comrades were hard at work, wondering, perhaps, what had become of me.

Eight separate times had I dived, and my strength was failing fast. Even now there was a ringing noise in my head which almost stupefied me, and was growing more painful every instant. If I stood up on the framework and tried to signal to the shore, I must stand at least one shot, and that was almost certain death.

Even at that desperate moment an absurd idea came into my head, as such things will come sometimes. I had read somewhere of an ingenious recipe for finding a safe place on ship-board in action by putting one's head out at a hole where a shot had come in, relying on the improbability of another entering at the same orifice. There was one corner of the framework splintered by several bullets; to it I crept, and held on despairingly.

Another flash from the battery. This time I could see the shell coming like a black speck in the sky. Anxiously I watched for the burst to come; but this time it came not, and the shell plunged into the sea fifty yards short, throwing up a mighty pillar of water, and ricochetting away far over my head. Was the fuze blind? I asked myself. No; there was another flash and another rush through the air, and sullen plunge in the sea beyond the target. The shrapnel practice was over, and they were firing plugged shell.

Now or never was my time. I climbed on to the woodwork, sprang to my feet, and waved my hands. From the shore I must have looked very like a picture of Andromeda chained to her rock. I was too late, however, to escape a shot. Once more the red flash spouted forth, and I heard the ominous rush coming nearer and nearer, till with a roar as of an express train it rushed past my head, carrying away with it the

left-hand top corner of the target, and hurling it far into the sea beyond. The concussion seemed to tear my feet from under me, and I fell, striking my head against the framework. I had just sense enough left to prevent myself rolling into the sea. My last glance at the shore showed the flag hoisted half-mast high ; and then I must have fainted away, for I remember no more till I found myself lying in my bed, with the surgeon-major applying strong ammonia to my nostrils with marvellous effect. I have little more to tell. Watching the effect of the shot from the battery, they had seen me standing there, just too late to stop the gun being fired ; had ceased the practice, and got a boat out without delay, though with a very faint hope of finding me alive. Of course the story was made a standing joke against me ever after, and I must own that I deserved it. Nevertheless, I have at least the satisfaction of considering that when we go forth again to fight the Russians or the Germans, or whatever other nation may elect to try with us a game of war on a large scale, I am never likely to be much nearer

“ The straight and dreadful pass of death,”
than I was that day on the sands of Shoeburyness.

TELEGRAPHY EXTRAORDINARY.

BY AN ARTILLERY OFFICER.

HFOR a month or two I had been enjoying the very problematical pleasures of a solitary station on detachment in the Garrison Artillery. To this branch of the service belong, as a rule, most of those curious erections of granite and iron which the yachting-man surveys here and there upon the out-of-the-way spots of the coast which he passes on his cruises ; and which he now and then, moved by curiosity, takes the trouble of visiting, should winds and waves be propitious, to the delight of the unfortunate occupant, who has possibly not seen a soul to speak to for days, or even weeks, according to circumstances. My lot it was to be stationed in one of the most remote of all these undesirable localities, the actual position of which I need not mention further, as it will be easily recognized by all who have been there, when I say that my only connection with the mainland was by a bank of deep shingle some mile and a half long, and practically impassable by sinews of average endurance ; being, in fact, the nearest approximation to that road on which the traveller can only advance by walking the other way, since he slips back two feet for every one foot forward, that I ever met with. Under these un-

favourable circumstances, it may be imagined that my spirits had sunk to rather a low ebb. It was summer fortunately, and I was sitting upon the strong pier built for landing heavy stores, with a line in my hand, fishing for whatever finny monster might take a fancy to the temptingly shell-less hermit crab I was using as a bait ; but the fish seemed as lazily disposed as everything else of an animate nature in the heat, and at length I was reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion that it was of no use trying to allure them ; so I resolved to pull in my line and betake myself to a book and a railway-rug on shore.

Alas for the futility of human resolutions ! No sooner had I given my fishing apparatus a tug, than I became aware of the painful fact that the strong ebb-tide had drifted my hooks against one of the massive baulks of timber which stood some twenty feet or so out in the sea, supporting the movable crane whereby heavy stores were hoisted out of the holds of the War Department barges. Under the circumstances it was in vain to think of releasing them from the shore ; so, resigning myself to circumstances, I went to hunt for a boat. There was a small duck-punt on the beach belonging to one of the coast-guards, in which I was wont to paddle about the creeks in calm weather, and I speedily ran it down to the water's edge. The oars were locked up in the boat-house ; but I was too lazy to go for the key, as it was an easy task to pull oneself out by means of the pier timbers, which accordingly I proceeded to do.

The hooks had caught rather deep in the woodwork, and I was disentangling them with one hand, whilst with the other I held on to the pier, when, either by carelessness or awkwardness, I ran one of them deeply

into my finger. Involuntarily I moved my other hand to disengage it, and in an instant the tide, running like a millrace just then, swept the boat and myself away. Mechanically I made a dive for the oars, but of course remembered at once that they were not there, and that if my getting back to my castle depended on myself it was a very hopeless business.

Here was a pretty predicament certainly ! I lifted up my voice and shouted lustily, in hopes that some one might hear me ; but there was no one in sight, and from the direction of the current I was being carried past the front of the fort, which was occupied only by guns, all the buildings being naturally set in rear of the defences. However absurd it may seem, I own that for a moment I was rather glad than otherwise that no one had answered to my call, since I had a lively sense of the ridiculous appearance I should present to any of my men, sitting in an oarless boat at the mercy of winds and waves. Moreover I thought at that season of the year I should be safe to be picked up by some vessel or other before I had gone far.

The tide, as I had often ascertained from charts and by actual experience, ran at the rate of about six miles an hour on that part of the coast, so that I was very rapidly carried out to sea. On my involuntary voyage I saw several ships at some distance ; but unfortunately my boat had been purposely built to show as little as possible above the water, and formed so inconspicuous an object that none of the vessels took any notice of me. There was nothing to wave as a signal, and I dared not stand up, as the punt was one of those proverbial craft in which, when you put a pipe in one pocket, you must put a tobacco-pouch in the other to keep the balance true.

By the time the land began to disappear in the distance, matters became very serious. If the wind or sea got up in the least it was quite certain that the boat would not live ten minutes; and even now, in the slight swell that exists on the calmest day at some distance from the shore, the motion was calculated to alarm me. Moreover the evening was drawing in; and though it was one of those days in June when the almanacs so obligingly inform us there is no real night, I knew what that meant in weather at all cloudy, and how impossible it would be for any ship to see me without a light to warn her of my presence. I turned out my pockets, and produced a pipe, a tobacco-pouch, a newspaper, and last, but not least, a box of lucifer-matches. In case of emergency I could always make a blaze with the paper, at all events, and meanwhile, being rather hungry and somewhat low-spirited, a pipe would be a solace, so I filled and lighted one.

Whether from the soporific effects of the tobacco, or from mere inaction, my next proceeding was to drop fast asleep, lying full length in my boat, which was luckily water-tight. I must have slept for an hour or two, when I was awakened by a noise of rushing water, and nearly overturned the punt in my first start. It was almost dark; but a few hundred yards away I saw the lights of a steamer bearing down upon me, and, from their position, was most disagreeably aware that a collision was imminent.

“Spat” went one lucifer match, then another and another. Lucifer-matches never will light when one is in a hurry. At length my paper blazed up, and at the same moment I uttered an ear-splitting yell, loud enough to be heard above the rushing of the screw. By this time the steamer was so near that I could hear

a voice on deck cry "Hard a-port!" and then, to my extreme relief, saw the red light swing round towards me. As she passed by a rope was flung, which I seized hold of just as my unlucky boat was caught by the swell and dragged down. In a few seconds more I was hauled on deck, after a succession of bumps up the side, which would have made me let go my hold of anything in existence—except that rope just then.

I found myself on the deck of a fine steam-yacht of about 250 tons, surrounded by a circle of faces, one of which, evidently belonging to the owner of the vessel, was familiar to me. My old school-fellow N. was not a man to be easily surprised; but he may well have been so that night at my apparition, from the depths of the ocean apparently. In fact afterwards he told me that, between the ghostly flare of the newspaper, and the fearful shriek I had improvised for the occasion, he could expect nothing but an inhabitant of Pandemonium to arrive on board; at which remark I laughed heartily, with a secret reservation in my own mind that, at the time the thing occurred, I had not felt at all in a laughing humour.

However, "all's well that ends well," and to be on board of a fine steam-yacht, with an old friend for her owner, was a most agreeable change from the solitude of my castle, or from my compulsory voyage on the deep. I own it was with a sigh that, having refreshed my inner man with diver's delicacies known to yachting-men in N.'s comfortable cabin, and having related my adventures for his edification, I demanded of him where he could put me on shore, so that I might return to the duties I had so involuntarily abandoned that afternoon.

N. pulled a long face.

"My dear B., I would do a good deal to oblige you, but I am bound for the Cape on most urgent business (I'll tell you the story afterwards), and really, unless we meet a homeward-bound ship, I fear you must come too, for I can't go back. I daresay you won't mind the voyage for a change, however; and if they make any fuss about it at the War Office, you can just report the facts of the case. We shall be at Cape Town in a month or six weeks at furthest, and we are sure to find some ship there that will take you back."

I was only too glad of the excuse, and told him so, though my heart smote me a little when I thought of the anxiety my family would experience on my account. However, there was really nothing to be done but to submit myself to my fate, especially as it was so pleasant a one; and, after a little more conversation with my old friend, I went to bed, very thankful to find myself there, instead of being in that great sepulchre that so securely holds what it receives until the Day of Judgment.

Next morning, when N. had shown me all the beauties of his yacht, and expatiated upon them to his heart's content, we took our easy-chairs and cigars under an awning near the stern, where the sun could not shine down on our unprotected heads; and there, sitting lazily listening to theplash and ripple of the water around us, N. told me his story, which, being one of the most curious, in some points, that I ever heard, I will repeat, for the benefit of my readers, as nearly as possible in his own words, only asking the aforesaid readers not to set the curious facts I am about to relate down in their own minds at once as incredible, since, strange as they are, they are nevertheless true.

I think I must begin quite at the beginning, B. (said N. to me), for it must be at least five or six years since I saw you last, and the events I am going to tell you happened within the last two. You must know, then, that I was the happy possessor of an Irish uncle, who, though he had never seen me, yet, having orthodox ideas on the subject of relationship and its claims, when he found himself dying sent for his lawyer and volume of the *Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*. Luckily for me that venerable volume had given me a place, though but an insignificant one, in its pages; so, finding I was the nearest relative he had living, my uncle caused his will to be drawn out, bequeathing his estate to me on the conditions that I should spend a certain part of each year there so long as it remained in my possession, and adding certain rigorous remarks upon the evils of absentee landlords. Having accomplished this task, my worthy kinsman set his house in order, took to his bed, and died peacefully, first writing a letter to me, to be forwarded by his lawyer after his decease, setting forth his reasons for the unexpected bounty he was bestowing upon me.

I was lounging in my club in London when this document reached me, with an explanatory and congratulatory note from the lawyer, and you may guess how surprised and delighted I was at such a piece of good fortune. I lost no time in hurrying over to Ireland and taking possession of my newly acquired estate, which I found to consist of a fine old house and some three thousand acres of excellent land, bringing in a very sufficient income, even at the low rate at which it was let to the tenants. The steward was an active intelligent man, who soon explained to me everything I required, and I had much pleasure in

retaining him in his post. After all the affairs were settled to my satisfaction, I began to look about me to see how I and my neighbours were likely to agree—an important point, since I had to spend at least two months of each year in that part of the world.

Irish miles are much more expansive than English ones, as I daresay you know; so my first proceeding was to take an Ordnance map of the country and mark out a circuit of ten miles, with my house as the centre, such being about the limit of distance for a comfortable drive or ride. I felt rather sold, however, when I found that within this circle there were apparently only two houses of any importance to be found, so that between these two all my hopes lay. The next question was who lived there, and to find out that point I summoned the steward and interrogated him.

That functionary's answers were plain and concise: No. 1 was occupied by a widow lady, family one daughter and one son, the whereabouts of the latter being unknown. No. 2 had for its master an old clergyman, doctor of divinity, unattached and unmarried; also so far as I could ascertain, held rather in awe by the people about him, owing to certain scientific proclivities, which, to their uneducated understanding, smacked of the diabolical; a prejudice rather intensified than lessened by the fact of his being a minister of the Protestant Church. However, this gossip did not concern me, so I cut it short.

Evidently then my duty was to call upon the widow and make her acquaintance. As for the D.D., I thought if he was anxious to know me he might very well call himself; but meanwhile I was not particularly anxious to meet him, knowing from experience how uninteresting people with a hobby generally make

themselves. Next morning, therefore, I had my horse (a beautiful bay thoroughbred belonging to my late uncle) saddled, and rode off on my voyage of discovery.

Rockfield (as was the name of Mrs. Cunningham's house) I found to be a very prettily situated little cottage, standing near the edge of an ornamental piece of water decorated here and there with quaint artificial islands covered with luxuriant flowers and foliage. The house itself was covered from basement to roof with one rich green mass of ivy, which barely allowed room for the openings of the windows. Altogether it was one of the most tasteful scenes I had ever looked on, and I augured well for the culture of the designers as I rode up to the door, dismounted, and rang the bell.

A fresh-looking servant-maid answered my summons and invited me to walk in. I did so, throwing the reins of my horse to a boy who appeared from the back of the house, and was ushered into a little drawing-room, whose furniture and pictures went far to realise my ideas of perfection in taste. There was an exquisite little gem of oil-painting over the mantelpiece, representing a view of Seratchell's Bay in the Isle of Wight, with which locality I was well acquainted. I was standing admiring this when the door opened, and Mrs. Cunningham and her daughter entered.

Mrs. Cunningham was a tall slender lady with a pale refined face, which must at one time have been very beautiful, but which I own was quite lost upon me just then in the sight of the girl that followed her. I won't try to describe her to you—you would only laugh at me if I were to go into raptures over her golden hair and her blue eyes, and all the rest; so I will only say that it was the most beautiful face I had ever seen or ever wish to see, and that from that moment I under-

stood what I had often laughed at—the possibility of what the novelists call “love at first sight.”

Don’t imagine I am going to give you a *résumé* of love-scenes and suchlike here, or to attempt to interest you in a woman you have never seen. Thank God, Ethel Cunningham has promised to be my wife, and when we are married you shall come and stay with us for a while and judge for yourself. I have only mentioned her at all because she is a necessary part of my story.

As you may imagine under the circumstances, after that first meeting I spent a good deal of my time at Rockfield, and very shortly declared my wishes with regard to her daughter to Mrs. Cunningham, who made no objections, since, indeed, she had learned to like me very rapidly, as I fancy anyone will do when you commence by liking them yourself. She thought it right, however, to give me a history of the family, from which I learned that her only son had caused her a painful life of anxiety, and had at last closed a long career of extravagance and prodigality by enlisting in the second battalion of the 3rd Buffs, then just proceeding to the Cape, as a means of escaping his creditors. I could only sympathise with her, and tell her I believed that the army was an excellent school for teaching any young man self-denial, and that I trusted he would return home changed for the better. At the same time I could not see that it had anything to do with my engagement to her daughter; so engaged we were accordingly, and after that the time passed, as you may imagine, very pleasantly and quickly for awhile. One day, as I was looking over some accounts in my study with my steward, I was startled to see Ethel riding up the avenue with every appearance of

haste. I ran out to meet her ; but she would not dismount, though evidently in a great state of nervous excitement. Gradually I gathered from her that she had heard that war had been declared at the Cape against the Zulus, and that her brother's was one of the regiments ordered to the front. Now to my certain knowledge the mails from the Cape had come in only three days before, and there was certainly no mention of war in them, though much of disturbances in the country ; so I could only imagine that some flying rumour with no foundation of truth had been going about, and that Ethel had given it too ready credence. To reassure her, therefore, I asked her where she had heard the news. The reply startled me, "From Dr. Edwards." Now, "Edwards" was the name of the Doctor of Divinity before mentioned ; so, unless he had gone suddenly mad, I could conceive no reason why he should be spreading such reports. However, whether mad or not I felt an access of righteous anger against him ; and, seeing that Ethel was very near a fit of crying, I lifted her perforce from her horse, and gave her in charge to my worthy housekeeper, telling her I would ride over and see Dr. Edwards myself and find out all about it if she would wait there till my return ; and with this object in view I was speedily in the saddle.

Dr. Edwards' house was a substantially built one, with no pretensions to beauty or elegance. I gave my card to the servant at the door, telling her I wished to see her master on urgent business, and was ushered into the study, a comfortable room filled with books, chiefly, as I could see at a glance, of a scientific and medical tendency. The doctor did not keep me long waiting. He was a short wizened-looking man, with an inveterate habit of taking snuff, but no other re-

markable characteristic. After the usual civilities had been interchanged I opened the subject I had come on abruptly.

"Is it the case, Dr. Edwards, that you have told Miss Cunningham that war is declared at the Cape?"

The doctor nearly let his snuff-box fall.

"Dear, dear, these women are too bad!" said he. "She solemnly promised me early this morning that she would tell that to no one; and here it is back already."

I confess I felt a longing to horsewhip the doctor.

"How dare you, sir, tell so deliberate a falsehood to anyone? The Cape mails came in last Friday, and there was not a word of war in them. You could not possibly have heard since."

Dr. Edwards smiled a queer smile.

"'Possible' is a very bad word to use in that sense, sir. Come, Mr. N., you have accused me of telling an untruth, so I owe it to myself to show you that I am no liar. Once for all, will you believe my word that I know war is declared?"

I hope I may be excused under the circumstances when I answered.

"I really cannot."

Dr. Edwards knit his brows.

"Seeing is believing, they say," said he quietly; "nevertheless there is a blessing upon those who believe without seeing. However, as my word of honour is not sufficient to persuade you, come with me, and I will show you proof."

So saying, he unlocked a small door opening out of the library, and motioned to me to enter.

I found myself in a small room lit by one little window, which threw a feeble light. From wall to

wall of the room a bench had been built somewhat similar to a carpenter's and divided into twenty-six equal compartments. Each compartment was marked with a letter of the alphabet in large type, and was divided into a number of small subdivisions, each containing—a common garden snail!

My first impulse was to make a rush for the door, to escape from the madman who I had no doubt was before me; but Dr. Edwards, probably foreseeing such a move, had locked us in and coolly pocketed the key. He stood now enjoying my astonishment with a satirical smile.

"It was your own choice to come, remember, Mr. N. However, I am not so mad as you think. You shall read a message from the Cape for yourself. Just take a piece of paper, and note down each letter as you see a snail corresponding to it move."

Mechanically I took the paper and pencil he offered me, whilst the doctor took in his hand a minute galvanic battery about the size of a thimble, and touched with one of its wires a snail lying in a box apart from all the others. The animal contorted itself slightly.

"That is the signal to my correspondent that I am here," said the operator. "Now watch."

I watched with all my attention, and presently saw one of the snails under the letter 'C' contract himself much as his predecessor had done; then followed an 'H,' and then several other letters, which I wrote down. A pause and then it began again. I wrote vigorously. Suddenly the whole thing came to an end, and I looked down at the paper. It read thus:

"Chelmsford enters Zululand by Natal."

"Well, are you satisfied now?" said the doctor.

"Satisfied?" answered I. "Are you the fiend in person, or what does it all mean?"

It was an impolite question certainly, but seemed to amuse him greatly.

"Come now, Mr. N.," said he, laughing, "you doubted my word, and I have a fair right to be angry; but under the circumstances of the case I will forgive you. Let us have a glass of wine, and I will tell you all about it."

I agreed, though in a great hurry to get back; and the doctor told me a most wonderful story, which sounded like a chapter of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, and which, but for ocular evidence, I should certainly have been very doubtful about. It appeared that he and a companion discovered the wonderful fact that when two snails were kept in contact with one another for some time, a most extraordinary sympathy was developed between them, answering somewhat to the relation between a mesmeriser and his patient when in the mesmeric trance, and that, by a series of experiments, they had found that when one snail was excited by galvanism, the other showed sufficient traces of sympathetic excitement to be recognised. Distance being quite immaterial to the success of the experiment, and the doctor's friend having business at the Cape, he agreed to take with him a box of these sympathetic snails, and to try the effect in its practical bearings. This was the result, a most satisfactory one as regarded the experiment.

I asked Dr. Edwards why he had not published the important news he had received.

He laughed.

"My dear sir, how long do you suppose my secret would have remained one had I done so? You your-

self are a living example of the results of telling it to one person under promise of silence. By the way, I hope you understand that what I have shown must be, for obvious reasons, considered as a strictly confidential communication?"

I assented—indeed I could scarcely do otherwise; but secrecy not being one of my virtues, from that day began a series of annoyances for me. I was perpetually on the point of letting out the startling news I had heard by pure inadvertence, and then, having to correct myself, leaving no doubt a very unpleasant impression upon my auditors. Moreover, Ethel would hear of nothing less than an excursion to the Cape in person, to buy her brother out before the actual fighting began. In vain I represented—first, that the authorities would not dispense with the services of a soldier whilst actually engaged in a campaign; and secondly, that even if they were willing to do so, no soldier worthy of the name would allow it to be done for him. At length I was obliged flatly to refuse to have anything to say to such a proceeding. This caused our first quarrel, a pretty serious one; though I had the satisfaction of knowing that it effectually prevented my bride-elect from—to put the fact in plain English—making a fool of herself.

Meanwhile months rolled on, and the war pursued its course. Dr. Edwards kept us well informed of events for a while, and saved us much anxiety during the time that Cunningham was shut up with his regiment in Fort Ekowe. But as spring wore on the messages suddenly ceased, and the next Cape mail brought a letter from the correspondent there announcing the tragic end of his snails at the hands of a new and unscientific Kaffir servant. This serio-comic end to the

great experiment amused me mightily at first, till I found it was no laughing matter ; for Ethel, who had hitherto been watching for news with breathless anxiety, now that it came only by months instead of days, became seriously ill from the strain upon her mind. At last in despair I volunteered to make a journey out to the Cape myself, see her brother, and bring him home if the war was over by that time ; and last, but not least, carry out a new box of snails. So here I am in the Atlantic Ocean, with a steam-yacht hired for the year, and a cargo of crawling things below which would make a hen's mouth water to look at.

Such was the conclusion of N.'s story, and at this exceedingly lame finale I burst into a fit of laughter, which my friend looked somewhat offended at, seeing, I fancy, as well as myself the ridiculous side of the narrative, but unfortunately feeling that the point was rather against himself. However, by a few well-chosen questions I soon pacified him, and then proposed that we should take a look at the snails.

" Dr. Edwards agreed to be always on the lookout from twelve till one o'clock each day," said N. " Suppose we send him a message ? It is just about noon now by Irish time, I think."

I agreed ; so we went down below to a room which had formerly been a cabin, but was now fitted up identically as N. had described that in the doctor's house to me. I looked at the motley assemblage of snails with interest. Each had his own little box with green food and water separate from the others. A stock of leaves had been provided by the simple process of sowing seed in a large iron tank filled with clay, and these leaves, being steeped in weak sugar-and-water, the creatures seemed to relish greatly.

N. proceeded to work. He took up his pigmy battery, and applied it to the snail meant to call attention to the message. The animal contorted itself most satisfactorily, but there was no answering result. After waiting awhile N. tried some of the others, but nothing followed.

"What on earth has gone wrong with them?" said he to me in despair at last. "There cannot be any one looking out on the other side."

"Perhaps the hens have eaten the doctor's snails," I suggested, consolingly. "Try again to-morrow."

But on the morrow it was just the same—no result again, and we looked rather blank.

"I'll tell you what," said my friend at last, "I am not going any farther on this wild-goose chase without being certain that all is right. I mean to go straight back to Southampton, and take train from there to Holyhead, and so to Ireland. I can drop you at your fort on the way."

So it befell that just a week after I had left my castle I was landed there again, to the great surprise, not to say delight, of the unhappy mortal who had been condemned to take my place. The Horse Guards were graciously pleased to be satisfied with my "reasons in writing;" and very soon I had settled down again, though not without a determination to hear the end of the strange story I had so curiously become acquainted with. A week later I received the following letter:

"MY DEAR B.—No wonder we could not get the snails to act. Poor Dr. Edwards is dead—shot down at his own avenue gate by some cowardly villain, and of course, in the confusion that followed, his experiments had a bad chance of being looked after. Miss Cunningham and I are to be married the day after to-

morrow in Dublin, at the Shelborne Hotel. Get a couple of days' leave, and come and be my best man at the wedding. We are going to start together in a day or two after for the Cape, to bring her brother home. Great hurry; no time for more.—Yours ever,

“N.”

I went to the colonel at once on the receipt of the above missive, and with difficulty obtained three days' leave; ran over to Ireland and saw my friend married (his bride being, by the way, all and more than all he represented her in the way of beauty). Four days later I dipped the flag on the roof of my fort in salute to the steam yacht whose side I knew so well, as she steamed gaily out to sea with an ebb-tide.

As to the great snail experiment, I have reason to believe that it has since been abandoned by Dr. Edwards' friend, so I have no hesitation in mentioning it in print. Whether he found that flesh and blood were unable to contend against the many evils they were heir to, and to make head against gutta-percha-covered cables and galvanic batteries, or whether, the Kaffir having demolished his stock-in-trade, he was unable, in that remote region, to provide another, I cannot say. But should any of my readers desire to repeat the experiment, the way is open to them. Only let them beware of hens—it is my last caution!

OUR HERO IN BLACK.

YE always spoke of ourselves as a “garrison town,” we good folks of Donjonville. And why should we not? Had we not barracks and a company of Foot, and, more than all, a Government chapel and a Government chaplain? What more would you have to constitute a garrison town? We had no fortifications it is true—nothing, in fact, that, strictly speaking, could be garrisoned—but then we had our noble and massive old castle, with its walls nine feet thick, which had stood a siege of six months by Robert Bruce, and a bombardment of six minutes (two shells did the business) by one of Cromwell’s generals. We swore by that castle, we swelled with conscious pride as we spoke of it; and a cynical tourist, who was overheard to describe it as “a gray squat building,” narrowly escaped being lynched upon the spot. This ancient fortress had, indeed, degenerated into a common gaol, a fact which somewhat detracted from the romance of its associations; but, despite the painful penitentiary cleanliness and order of its interior, there was still a fine old feudal look about portions of its exterior, and we Donjonvillites could, at any rate, boast that there was not in the three kingdoms any castle of its age in such perfect preservation.

We were a trifle dull, perhaps, at Donjonville—

prejudiced persons from neighbouring towns, envious of our historical prestige, sometimes pronounced us stagnant; indeed, a distinguished novelist, who once honoured us with a flying visit, afterwards described Donjonville as “probably the dullest spot on the habitable globe.” But, then, how could he possibly be able to judge from seeing Donjonville for a few hours on a miserably wet day; and what weight, after all, does any sensible person attach to the flippant utterances of a shallow scribbler? Not, mind you, that we were not sometimes conscious ourselves of being dull, and at such times we were wont to execrate the dulness of Donjonville with singular unanimity and forcibleness of expression. But then it was one thing to pass unfavourable criticisms upon Donjonville ourselves, and quite another to tolerate such strictures from strangers. On the whole, a pretty wide experience of English provincial towns inclines me to think that Donjonville was, after all, not so dull as many places which make far greater pretensions to liveliness.

We rejoiced of course in a plethora of gossip, for you will generally find that the smaller the town the bigger the gossip; and we had an admirable assortment of gossip-mongers of both sexes, the male element, however, being, I am bound to say, the preponderating one. We had an American “colonel,” a retired sea-captain, and a militia major, whom I would have backed both as retailers and inventors of scandal against any three in the world. But rich as we were in accomplished gadabouts, we were even richer in original “characters,” whose eccentricities kept us constantly provided with entertainment. Foremost among these, by right of his individuality not less than by right of his social position, stood our Government chaplain, who was also

practically the vicar of Donjonville, there being no other "Established" place of worship within a mile of the town. The Rev. Joseph Stickler—"the last of the Sticklers," as he used, half-proudly, half-pathetically, to style himself, for he was a widower, and his only son had been killed at sea—was a remarkable man in many ways. In height he was not more than five feet three inches, but in girth his proportions were gigantic. I have never seen so short a man carry the middle button of his waistcoat in anything like such an advanced position as Joseph Stickler carried his. His knees had been hidden from his sight for years. He had a leg—or I should say two legs, for he possessed the normal complement—of perfect shape. If Mr. Stickler had any mundane vanity, and even the best of men are not without it, his legs were the objects of that vanity. It was because he was just a little vain of them, I suspect, that he clung to the good old fashion of knee-breeches, black-silk stockings, and buckled shoes long after the rest of the civilised world had discarded those integuments, though probably, if all the leaders of fashion had possessed such elegant extremities as our Government chaplain, the modern trouser would have been unknown. In deportment the Rev. Joseph Stickler could have given Mr. Turveydrop a lesson. He carried himself with such dignity, that when he stood talking on the parade with "Cunngle" Hiram B. Fulton, a lanky "Down-Easter" of six feet three, the parson struck you as being by far the bigger man of the two. His florid clean-shaven face would have been handsome had it been a trifle less fleshy; and, at any rate, no one could deny that it was a good resolute English face, full of courage and sense.

So much for the Rev. Joseph Stickler's physique.

But his manners were even more remarkable than his figure. He had a blunt forcible way of calling a spade a spade, both in the pulpit and in private life, which often shocked persons burdened with a particularly squeamish sense of propriety. I heard him once put an extinguisher upon an affected and foolish lady, who was expatiating on the virtues of the son whom she had just sent to school, by blurting out gruffly and brusquely :

“Humbug, madam, humbug ! There never was a boy yet who wasn’t a thief and a liar. A good boy is a monstrosity, madam, a *lusus naturæ*, sure to come to the gallows or some equally bad end. There’s some hope of a bad boy : flog the vice out of him at school, and it’s ten to one he’ll turn out a decent man when he grows up.”

So far you will say that there was not much that was heroic about Joseph Stickler ; and possibly, had you “sat under him” and listened to his pulpit utterances, the sound common sense of which was constantly marred by his grotesque habit of stopping in the full flood of his discourse to remonstrate, in the homeliest fashion imaginable, with the drowsy or heedless members of the congregation, you would have probably found it still harder to see anything heroic in our eccentric parson. But for all that he *was* a hero, and this fact I am sure you will admit readily enough before you reach the end of my story. For, whatever Ouidà and Guy Livingstone may try to persuade you to the contrary, a hero need not by any means be a giant in height and a Hercules in strength, with Norman brow and Grecian nose ; indeed, I take it that there have been far more heroes under five feet six inches than over that standard, and far more snub-noses

among them than even Roman ones. However, to come back to our muttons, you shall hear why and how Joseph Stickler came to be considered a hero. It was with the younger male portion of the community that he first established his claim to that title, and the manner of it was remarkable.

I have already mentioned our parson's propensity to administer homely, but at the same time fearfully impressive, rebukes to those of his congregation whose conduct seemed to him indecorous during divine service. The most frequent recipients of this verbal chastisement were the unhappy Sunday-school children, whose horribly uncomfortable pens—I cannot call them seats—were immediately facing the pulpit. But the punishment of these unfortunates was not confined to words. The Rev. Joseph Stickler had a sturdy henchman who was as vigorous a disciplinarian as his master, and a scarcely less original and eccentric character. Billy Marks—for such was the somewhat undignified name of this representative of Donjonville Bumble-dom—filled a rather nondescript ecclesiastical position ; before service he acted as verger, during prayers he acted as clerk, when the sermon commenced he vacated his desk and went aloft to the gallery, where, armed with a long cane, he stationed himself immediately behind the school children. Heaven help the hapless boy or girl who dared to doze or exhibit the slightest symptoms of inattention during the preacher's discourse ! Softly would the artful and lynx-eyed William creep along the cocoa-nut matting until he was within striking distance of his prey, and then the cane was cautiously raised, to descend upon the head or shoulders of the luckless victim with a thwack that sounded all over the building. And if the watchful

Billy, whose attention to his master's homily must have been of a rather divided sort, failed to detect a delinquent, the stern voice from the pulpit, which he knew too well, would at once call his attention to the omission. It was on one of these occasions, when Billy was guilty of a dereliction of duty, that the first memorable exploit of our hero in black was achieved. The circumstances were these :

The officers of the "garrison," four in number, occupied a pew in the gallery not far from the *enfants terribles* who were Bill Marks' special charge during sermon-time. It was a warm day in summer, and, what with the heat and the sonorous eloquence of the preacher, there was a general disposition to drowsiness among the congregation which nothing but a strong sense of duty and the exercise of considerable control could overcome. Even the vigilant custodian of juvenile morals nodded at his post, and forgot that there was an eagle eye upon him. Suddenly the preacher paused, and, in a voice that had more of sorrow than of anger in it, called "Billy Marks ! "

Up to his feet in an instant sprang Billy, conscious of his own backslidings, touched with remorse by the reproachful accents of his master, burning to atone for his fault by some extraordinary display of zeal. The first object which met the zealous and repentant William's eye, as, confused and only half awake, he glared about him for a victim, was the head of a very young ensign who was peacefully slumbering in the corner of the officers' pew. Without pausing to think of the consequences, Billy brought his cane down, thwack ! right upon the sconce of the sleeping warrior. That gallant youth sprang instantly upright at the touch of this rude Ithuriel's spear, and gazed round

him with a wild bewildered stare. On all sides he saw grinning faces—an audible titter ran through the school-children—sounds suggestive of suppressed cachination came from behind pocket-handkerchiefs applied ostensibly to their normal use ; the cheeks of his noble officers were undistinguishable in colour from their uniforms, and their heads were bent in an attitude which could scarcely be accepted as devotional. A ghastly and horrible suspicion stole into the mind of the young ensign that *he* was the object of all this unseemly mirth, and that he had somehow, though he had not the faintest idea how, made himself supremely ridiculous. With crimson and perspiring countenance he sat as rigid as the tinted Venus for the remainder of the sermon, suffering all the agonies of a martyr at Smithfield. Whether the Rev. Joseph Stickler had perceived Billy Marks' mistake or not, no one could tell ; he went on imperturbably with his sermon as if nothing had happened ; but if he *had* thoroughly realised all that had happened, and I am inclined to suspect that he had, the control which he exercised over his nerves was of itself heroic, and worthy of an ancient Stoic or an Indian brave. Be this as it may, however, the sequel was a scene which none who witnessed it would ever forget.

The barracks were but a short distance from the chapel, both being situated in the imposing and spacious square which Donjonvillites spoke of proudly as “the parade,” and which was pronounced by a Donjonville cabinet-maker, who had once visited London, to be far superior to even the world-famed Trafalgar Square. The officers had marched the “garrison” back to barracks, and had retired to their own quarters, before one half of the congregation had

emerged from St. Mary's. In the privacy of their own apartment they at once began to "roast" their juvenile and verdant comrade. The senior captain, Spofforth, a portly florid man, who belied his appearance, by being really "the coolest hand going," having closed the door, addressed the young ensign with great seriousness.

"You know, Sparkes," he said, "this is not the first time the regiment has been grossly insulted by the chaplain. This abominable outrage is simply the culminating point of a long series of deliberate insults. But now the thing must be promptly stopped. I must insist upon your demanding a public apology at once from Mr. Stickler."

"Ye-es," stammered Sparkes, who was exceedingly angry still, and very red in the face, but didn't quite see how his senior's injunctions were to be carried out.

"You will oblige me and your brother officers, Sparkes, by meeting Mr. Stickler as he crosses the parade from the chapel to his house, and immediately demanding an ample apology on behalf of the regiment, which has been outraged in your person."

The recollection of that sounding thwack from Billy Marks's cane rushed into Ensign Sparkes' mind ; his blood tingled at the thought of that monstrous indignity, and he answered firmly,

"You may trust me, Captain Spofforth. The dignity of the regiment shall not suffer in my hands. I will go at once and confront Mr. Stickler, and extract an apology from him on the spot."

Big with self-importance as the accredited champion of the regiment, Ensign Sparkes clapped on his shako fiercely, and strode out into the square to exact prompt reparation from the insulter.

Meanwhile, unconscious of all these machinations, the Rev. Joseph Stickler quietly disrobed himself in the vestry, and then proceeded to cross the parade to his house. Just as he was opposite the barrack-gates and in front of the barrack-windows, he became aware of a tall figure, in scarlet, approaching him with rapid steps. In another instant the Rev. Joseph found himself confronted by the insulted subaltern, who, with glaring eyes and flaming cheeks, addressed him thus:

“Sir, I have been most grossly insulted and assaulted by your orders. The whole regiment, sir, has been affronted in my person. I demand an apology!”

“A *what*!” exclaimed the chaplain, falling back, and surveying his interrogator with a look of supreme amazement.

“An apology, sir; an ample apology!” repeated young Sparkes, hotly.

“Young man,” said the Rev. Joseph Stickler severely, “I don’t know what this buffoonery means. If it were not so early in the day I should say that you were drunk, sir.”

“What, sir!” exclaimed the enraged ensign; “you refuse to apologize—you dare to add to the insult by insinuating that I am not sober! Let me tell you, sir,” assuming an air of bellicosity that might have awed even a bubblyjock, “that if it were not for your cloth, sir, I would give you the d—dest thrashing you ever had in your life!”

The face of the “last of the Sticklers” grew black as thunder; lightning blazed from his eye; his whole body heaved with the volcano of indignation that raged within him. For an instant he seemed petrified, but only for an instant; then, with an agility quite extraordinary in a man of his obesity, he divested himself

of his coat, planted his feet firmly and defiantly, and said, with grim irony,

“O, don’t let my cloth for a moment interfere with your desire to inflict corporal chastisement. Proceed, sir; you are quite at liberty to thrash me, sir—if you can.”

A peal of laughter burst like a volley of musketry from the vicinity of the barracks. Sparkes glanced hurriedly round; there was the whole “garrison” crowded at the barrack-gates, convulsed with merriment, and there, in the windows of the officers’ quarters, was—no, he must be mistaken—yes, a fact!—there was Spofforth himself, holding his sides while the tears ran down his purple face. Too late it flashed upon the unhappy Sparkes that he was both making a fool of himself, and being made a fool of. Sharply turning on his heel with a smothered anathema, which, like the parish-clerk’s sweeping curse, seemed to include “all persons that on earth do dwell,” Ensign Sparkes hurried back, a piteous spectacle of mingled shame, rage, and discomfiture. Whilst the Rev. Joseph Stickler, as he struggled back into his coat, was distinctly heard to ejaculate,

“Preposterous young puppy! Talk of thrashing me, indeed!”

And so, amid the ill-suppressed applause of the lookers-on, the parson strode, fuming and furious, to his house.

From that moment the Rev. Joseph Stickler was a hero in the eyes of the “garrison” and the youth of Donjonville. Staid and respectable middle-aged society shook its head, and declared that the chaplain had behaved in a most undignified manner, and had quite forgotten what was due to his cloth. I suppose these

douce people were right, and that it would have exhausted even the resources of Turveydropian deportment to have carried off such a scene with dignity. But that was the only time that Joseph Stickler was ever known to allow his eccentricity to imperil his dignity ; as a rule, the latter was invariably the accompaniment and correction of the former.

Middle-aged propriety, then, might be excused for failing to see anything heroic in conduct which had only won the irreverent admiration of persons addicted to taking a sporting view of even the gravest matters, but not the less among that class had the Rev. Joseph Stickler established himself as a hero. It was not long, however, before even the “unco guid” of Donjonville were compelled to admit that their respected and esteemed, though eccentric, parson was veritably and unmistakably a hero—of the sort which a delighted and sympathetic Sovereign is proud to decorate with the Victoria Cross or the Albert Medal. And this was the startling incident which suddenly revealed to Donjonville the fact that the black coat and knee-breeches of Joseph Stickler incased as brave a man as ever faced a battery or charged a square in all the glory and glitter of scarlet and gold.

One summer afternoon, as the chaplain was passing the barrack-gates, he noticed that there was something unusual taking place in the courtyard. The soldiers were gathered in excited groups, and there was that indescribable air of agitation about them which is always noticeable in a crowd when something tragic is astir. The Rev. Joseph Stickler walked in and inquired the cause of the commotion. He was told that one of the men, a wild fellow named Hennessy, had gone mad with drink, had locked himself in the guard-

room, armed himself with a loaded musket, and was threatening to shoot anyone who approached him.

"Have you informed the officer on duty?" asked the chaplain.

"The officers, sir, are all away at a cricket-match."

"And where's the sergeant of the guard?"

"Here, sir."

"Well, sergeant, why don't you arrest this man at once and put him in irons?"

The sergeant looked sheepish as he replied,

"Why, ye see, sir, it's not as if he was only drunk, but he's reg'lar ravin' mad with *delirium tremens*; he's got every musket in the rack loaded, and he's that desperate he'd pick three or four of us off before we could lay hands upon him. I durstn't chance it, sir."

The chaplain's face grew dour and black; there was a ringing resolute tone of command in his voice as he said,

"Fetch me a blacksmith at once. Tom Baynes is the best man; and tell him to bring his forehammer with him."

A messenger was despatched for the blacksmith. In the interval the chaplain calmly reconnoitred the guard-room, and the soldiers stood looking at him, their voices hushed into whispers, wondering what would come next, and what the parson was about to do. They were not long kept in suspense. The messenger returned, bringing with him Tom Baynes the blacksmith, a big, gaunt, powerful man, black with the grime of the forge, girt with his leathern apron, his forehammer on his shoulder. Touching his forelock to the parson, Tom looked at him in some bewilderment.

Motioning to the guard-room door, the chaplain moved forwards, saying,

"This way, Baynes."

When the door was reached the voice of the madman was heard within blaspheming horribly, and yelling threats of vengeance against every mother's son of them. The blacksmith paused and his face lengthened. Here was a queer job; he didn't half like it. He scratched his head and began to reflect, but his reflections were cut short by the chaplain,

"Tom, I want you to break in that door; a couple of blows will do it."

Tom Baynes hesitated. Then you should have seen our parson. Tom used to say afterwards that he never saw a man "grow so big all on a sudden like." Pointing to the door with a gesture and a tone which there was no disobeying, the chaplain said sternly,

"Baynes, smash-in that guard-room door this instant; and you, sergeant, have your picket ready to rush in and secure the man at once."

Three vigorous blows from the forehammer burst open the door, and revealed Hennessy standing behind the long deal table with a dozen cocked and loaded muskets ranged before him. His firelock was at his shoulder, and as he levelled it straight at the doorway with his finger on the trigger, he swore with the most horrid oaths that he would blow out the brains of any man who dared to enter. The sergeant and his men with scared faces fell back at this appalling sight; but Joseph Stickler did not change colour or budge an inch. He simply pointed to the maniac and said,

"Sergeant, do your duty; arrest that man at once!"

The barrel of Hennessy's musket was directed steadily at the sergeant's head; the sergeant felt uncomfortable, his cheek blanched, and he made a further strategic movement to the rear. The madman gave a fierce

derisive yell that might have made any one's blood run cold to hear it.

"Now, you black-coated old devil-dodger, out of the way there, and let me have a clear shot at that sergeant! Out o' the way, I tell ye, or else I'll blow your head to pieces!"

"Sergeant," cried the chaplain, in a voice of thunder, "arrest that man at once!"

"Ha, ha!" roared Hennessy, "he knows better. The first man that passes that door I'll send to hell in quick time."

And in extenuation of the sergeant's backwardness it must be admitted that the fellow looked as if he meant to keep his word. He was a desperate, determined, and ferocious man at any time; but now that he was literally and uncontrollably mad with drink, he was capable of any crime.

"Am I to arrest this man myself, sergeant?" asked the chaplain, in a quiet firm voice, very different from the angry tone of command he had used a moment before.

"Arrest me, parson! I'd like to see ye try it! If ye put a foot or hand beyond that doorway, I'll shoot ye down like a dog! If ye don't clear out from where ye are before I count *three*, so help me, I'll fire!"

The parson paid no heed to the raving maniac, but with ineffable disgust and scorn said to the sergeant,

"What! are you afraid, man? Why, then I suppose a black coat must show you red coats the way, that's all!"

"Clear out o' that!" yelled Hennessy. "I give you fair warning. *One!*"

"Come away, sir; come back. He's a desperate

chap, he'll fire; he's mad, sir; there's murder in his eye!" cried half-a-dozen soldiers at once.

"*Two!*" shouted Hennessy.

Without another word the chaplain marched straight up to the madman, who covered him with his musket as he advanced, and swearing he would shoot the parson dead, pressed the trigger with his finger as he roared, "*Three!*" Every one of the petrified and horror-stricken spectators expected to hear the report, and see the parson's skull shattered. But the keen, resolute, unflinching gray eyes of the brave man, who slowly advanced upon him, fascinated the furious lunatic; there was an aspect of command as well as of dauntless courage in the face and bearing of our hero in black, which must have irresistibly roused the man's instinct of discipline, and paralysed his murderous aim, for he allowed the parson to walk right up till the muzzle of the musket was not a foot from his head. Quietly grasping the weapon in one hand, Joseph Stickler raised the barrel above his head, and that instant the deafening report rang out, and the ball went crashing through the ceiling. To have dropped the discharged musket and seized another from the row that lay all cocked and loaded before him need have been, for Hennessy, only the work of a second. But the chaplain never took his eye off the madman's face, and the fellow was fairly cowed by that calm steady look, which seemed to pierce him through and through. Slowly the parson's hand slipped down the barrel till it rested with a firm grasp upon the man's wrist. Then, without turning, he said coolly, with a ring of withering contempt in his tone,

"Here, sergeant, perhaps *now* you'll not be afraid to put this man under arrest!"

The sergeant summoned a couple of file to assist him ; but the madman, whose eyes were still riveted on the parson's, made no effort at resistance, allowing himself to be seized and led away with a dazed look on his face, as though he had been gazing on something that had dazzled and blinded him. Then, amid the ringing cheers of the soldiers, the Rev. Joseph Stickler walked quietly out of the barracks.

Before next morning every man, woman, and child in Donjonville had heard of the parson's heroism. Before the next Sunday the fame of it had spread all round the country-side, and curious folks came in from far and near on Sunday evening to stare at the real live hero, who stood there in unheroic gown and bands, and delivered his homely homily as though wholly unconscious of the admiring eyes that were fixed upon him. I suppose no quality of head or heart so entirely wins the admiration of Englishmen as that of cool dauntless presence of mind under danger. We like to think and pride ourselves on the fact that it is pre-eminently a characteristic of the English race. But from the way in which we worship and adore the men who display it, a foreigner might be justified in cherishing the suspicion that we are conscious of its extreme rarity among us, and value it accordingly.

I don't think that we Donjonville folks were one whit less plucky than our neighbours ; but we must have been secretly conscious that under such trying circumstances we should hardly have borne ourselves so well as our parson, otherwise we should not have elevated him, as we did with one consent, into the position of a hero. We were too proud of possessing a hero to be critical. His enemies and his detractors, and even he was not without these inevitable accompani-

ments of fame, said he was a glutton. It was a harsh term to use of one whose exquisite taste in gastronomy was to some of us one of the pleasantest features of his character. He was a genial soul, was Joseph Stickler, when he unbent over those "little suppers," which were veritable *Noctes Ambrosianæ* to those who were permitted to partake of them; for our hero was not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others. Happy mortals those who were privileged to be guests at these symposia! They could forget that they were in dreary Donjonville, and imagine themselves transported to some gastronomic Paradise, some culinary Elysium. No man is a hero to his valet, if we are to believe Madame Cornuel; but, I take it, a man may be a hero to his cook when that functionary is but the executant of ideas which emanate from the master-mind. Joseph Stickler had an excellent cook, and I am sure that in her eyes he was not one whit less a hero than he was in ours. Nor did the aureola of his heroism lose any of its radiance when he sat at the head of his own supper-table, keenly enjoying our enjoyment of the dainty dishes which had cost him more time and thought, perhaps, than any but an epicure could excuse. Had he had the ordering of the calendar I am sure that both Brillat Savarin and Abbé Duchesne would speedily have been canonised as saints; and I am inclined to think they deserve the honour as much as some who figure on the saintly bead-roll. However, it was impossible that the *pro-fanum vulgus*, which feeds, but knows not what it is to eat intelligently, should sympathise with this trait in the character of our hero in black. Nor will I insist upon claiming for that trait the right to be considered as an attribute of heroism, or even in itself to be pro-

nounced heroic. But in the case of Joseph Stickler it had a posthumous reflection of the heroic thrown upon it, which is my excuse for introducing it here.

Our hero was smitten down with sickness; the weeks rolled on, and still we missed his portly figure and familiar face, which for five-and-thirty years had been as constant to Donjonville as the dial of the old Elizabethan clock, which from the castle-turret looked down upon the parade. Then at length came the sad news that we should never again see the “last of the Sticklers” in the flesh. He was dying of atrophy, we were told; he could retain no nourishing food; the daintiest dishes in the world were but a mockery to him now. Humorist as he was, he saw keenly the grim irony of Fate; and the last words he was heard to utter were these, spoken impressively, as he laid his wasted hand upon the arm of his oldest and dearest friend,

“They’ll say it was a judgment, and they’re right. Tell your friends, when I am gone, that you knew a parson who died of starvation because he had ‘made a god of his belly.’”

Such was the hard measure he meted out to himself. But we judged him more leniently. We all, high and low, remembered only his virtues; we felt that we had lost a rare man in our hero in black, the like of whom we should never see again.

“And when we buried him, the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.”

A SAILOR'S YARN.

THROUGH SMYTHE'S CHANNEL, STRAITS OF MAGELLAN.

HOMEWARD bound ! What a thrill of delight does the old tune wake in our hearts ! The sailors at the capstan trudge round to its familiar strains as they have not done these four weary years ; for are not our orders for England on board ? and homesick west-country bluejackets remind one another, as they heave with a will, that we are to be at Plymouth in seventy days.

The captain of the maintop, bending his gaunt form across a hatchway, accosts our smallest midshipmite :

“ Beg yer pardon, sir ; but how far might we be from Devonport ? ”

“ Not much more than 8,000 miles,” squeaks the youngster, hugely delighted that his opinion should be asked ; and with a satisfied “ Thank'ee, sir,” and touch of his forelock, the gigantic ruler of topmen resumes his work, humming to himself the while, to the not very mellifluous lueubrations of our blind fiddler :

“ When we gets safe to Plymouth Docks
The pretty girls comes down in flocks,
And each to one another says they,
‘ Here's Jack come home with four years' pay.’ ”

Clink, clink ! sounds the cable in the hawsepope.
“ Heave and away, sorr ! ” shrieks the little Irish boat-

swain from his perch forward ; and so we weigh anchor and shape our course for the Southern Seas. Our homeward track from the Pacific will take us into a corner of the world about which English society seems strangely ignorant. The average "well-informed" Briton, if confronted with questions as to the topographical features, the climate, or the means of existence, religion, government, and economy of the races scattered over the thousands of square miles adjacent to Smythe's Channel, will, perhaps, at first vaguely generalise, but in the end be compelled to admit himself supremely ignorant of them all.

Such, at least, was the condition of the present writer, until brought face to face with the glorious mountain scenery which is the distinctive feature of this district. For the benefit of those who may be in a similar predicament, be it observed that, between the archipelago of closely-packed islands which stretch from Cape Penas to the Straits of Magellan and the mainland, winds for nearly six hundred miles an intricate channel. Few Europeans have explored it, and none have attempted to reside there, or open up a trade with its wild inhabitants. The aboriginal Patagonians (a scanty race not unlike the North American Indians, but still lower in the scale of humanity) are left to fight their battle for existence, unmolested by the "civilisation" and "fire-water" of the paleface, which have wrought such havoc with the unhappy red man. The line of mail-steamer to the Pacific avoid it, dreading its sinuous turnings, rushing currents, and misty weather. Its channel, too, in some places barely two hundred yards wide, renders it impassable to sailing vessels, so that until the introduction of steam the adjoining district was almost *terra incognita*.

But to the navigator who is willing to take the risks, it offers smooth water, and an immunity from those fearful storms which have made the weather in the vicinity of Cape Horn a byword amongst sailors ; and as such we chose it.

Our cruise down the western coast of South America, from Coquimbo to the Gulf Penas, is devoid of incident ; the two all-important factors, storm and shipwreck, being luckily wanting to give their special interest to the voyage. Towards the evening of the tenth day, land is sighted right ahead, and it is definitely settled that, weather permitting, we shall enter Symthe's Channel the following morning. So we adjust compasses and re-examine charts, and at early dawn stand in for the entrance to the channel.

As we draw towards the coast, the towering masses of granite, of which it is composed, become more clearly defined. The mighty Pacific swell has eaten through the smaller crags, lapping as it seems the very foot of the Andes. Huge mountains, rising sheer out of the sea, shut in the view ahead, their bases clad in forests of firs ; above, the bald, gray, or lichen-covered rock, and with summits yet deep in winter snow. Albatrosses, resting sleepily on the oily water, start up as we approach, and sea-lions snort defiance at us. But a fleecy mist hanging round the bases of the cliffs augurs badly for our progress to-day, at least if it increases. It is a curious sensation, this slipping along at considerable speed, straight towards an iron-bound coast ; for, as yet, no entrance to the strait is visible.

Just as we are beginning to think we have missed the channel altogether, the bluff outstanding mass of verdure on the left which had hitherto appeared part and parcel of the mainland, opens out from the rest,

disclosing a watery avenue on which the rising sun glints cheerily. As we watch it the islet assumes more and more the form of a huge broad-brimmed hat, and we recognise Sombrero Island and the entrance to Smythe's Channel.

The low-lying fog threatens every instant to settle across our path, debarring further progress, so we push on at speed. By eight A.M. the land has closed in on either hand to such a degree that an error in a turn of the helm may put us on the rocks. Suddenly the mists descend, enveloping the ship in a soft impalpable rain, and limiting our vision to fifty yards all round. To stop the engines is the work of an instant; and so we lie a log upon the waters for nearly twenty minutes, all hands on the look-out for the land which we know is only too close. At last the fog lifts, just in time to enable us to wriggle from an unpleasant propinquity to the western shore; and unveiling a magnificent stretch of water, with lofty snow-capped mountains on either side, as far as we could see.

On the flat outlying rocks, within a stone's throw of our ship, some seals are basking; the wash of the screw, as we move the engines, disturbs them; the sleek bullet heads are raised for an instant, the next with a simultaneous flop they disappear.

So the day wears on, each turn of the channel disclosing fresh views of a savage grandeur which is almost awful. Sometimes, where the channel narrows and the mountains tower highest, a bridge of cloud forms overhead, making the water round us inky black, and giving a weird cavern-like appearance to our path in front. Then we emerge again, and the fickle sunlight falls on pleasant valleys and slopes of open country, with deep luxuriant grass, and scattered

clumps of timber, among which guanaco and dappled fallow deer are feeding. Flocks of wild geese pass over our mastheads, craning their long necks curiously from side to side, in wonder at the infrequent sight.

Towards noon we enter the most intricate part of the channel, English Narrows, and for two hours our whole attention is absorbed in the delicate operation of steering our vessel through them. These once passed, Indian Reach, although by no means simple navigation, seems broad by comparison; but here, as well as everywhere, in this badly surveyed locality, a vigilant look-out is, as we subsequently found to our cost, necessary to avoid dangers unmarked on the chart.

It is with a feeling of relief to our highly strung nerves, therefore, that we observe the entrance to Port Grappler, and, changing our course, glide round a tiny islet, so close that the trees overhanging the water, almost touch the ship, and drop anchor in a fairy basin among the mountains.

Before the echoes of the rushing cable have died away among the hills, sportsmen are off to try for snipe and wild-duck. Pulling ashore through fields of kelp and seaweed, we make for a tiny cascade at the upper end of the harbour, and land on a beach of rough boulders, with marsh and rushes in between, from which at every step the snipe get up.

The banging that ensues, multiplied by the echoes, would do credit to a Volunteer company skirmishing, and at first the bag fills rapidly.

Two of our number, more ambitious than the rest, force their way through the marshy land to where the hills rise abruptly, hoping, perhaps, to get a shot of deer or guanaco. They agree to fire three shots in succession from the waterside as a signal when they

want the boat sent on shore for them; and so we wish the enthusiasts adieu.

We who stop behind have good sport amongst the fens, and return on board in the gloaming after a four hours' tramp mostly over our boots in water, thoroughly tired, and quite ready for dinner. Counting the bag, we have nineteen couple of snipe, three brace of ducks, two geese, and a teal; a sum-total with which we are quite content.

As the gloom deepens, and no shot is heard from the shore, some little anxiety is felt for our "deer-stalking" messmates; but an overpowering sleepiness and the thoughts of the morning watch conquer all my misgivings, and I turn in.

Alas, for my night's rest! I seem barely to have been asleep half an hour when a gruff voice outside my cabin-door informs me that it is "Twelve o'clock, sir; officer of the watch's compliments, sir, which Lieutenant Fyson 'e ain't fetched on board yet, sir, which you'll have to keep 'is watch for 'im, sir."

With a growl not loud but deep at the prospect of this midnight vigil, and a strong tendency to swear at our truant messmates, I hasten on deck.

It is raining hard and very foggy; and the first gust of wind, as it whistles down from the snows above us, turns all my annoyance into profound apprehension for the well-being of the unfortunate votaries of the chase exposed to its icy blasts, without shelter, on such a night as this.

The face of the officer of the watch whom I believe reflects my fears; neither he nor the look-outs have seen or heard anything from the shore, and he dreads the worst. But to attempt to search the hills in this black darkness would be worse than useless, and so he

dives below, and I am left in undisputed charge of the ship.

Even in that land-locked harbour the blustering wind has raised a slight swell, and the vessel lurches over from side to side with an uneasy creaking.

The two middies of the watch, having, as they consider, discharged their duty by bringing me up a basin of steaming cocoa, go through the formula of asking permission to read in the chart-house, and are soon sitting back to back, each with his book on his knees, deep in the arms of Morpheus.

I trudge wearily round the upper deck, cautioning the look-outs to be specially careful to report any lights on shore, examining the cables, and finally resume my beat on the quarter-deck.

Gradually my suspicions that my waterproof, so trusty four years ago, is failing me at last, and leaking, are merged in the certainty that I am thoroughly wet to the skin, and then, but not till then, the rain ceases. The squalls become less heavy, and finally die away, and at half-past three the clouds drift asunder, and the moon shines out on a still night.

Suddenly a look-out comes trotting aft on tiptoe of excitement.

"I seed mun, zurr, I seed mun straik a light to yonder by the watter-saide!"

Half a minute's careful watching satisfies us that there is a light burning dimly on shore in the direction he indicates.

Our departure is appointed for five A.M., and it wants but five minutes to four. An hour is but a short interval in which to search the bush for wanderers; so I resolve to take a boat on shore immediately.

Leaving one of the midshipmen in charge of the

ship, I step into the boat as eight bells is struck, and make for land as rapidly as twelve pairs of stalwart arms can propel me.

At first we seem to have struck upon an *ignis fatuus*; the coxswain of the boat declares he can see nothing; and only now and then, and faintly, do I distinguish a red glow reflected on the tree-trunks. Ten minutes' pull, however, brings us near enough to set all doubts at rest; and another quarter of an hour lands us among the coarse grass and rushes on shore.

Strict orders are given for no man to leave the boat; and with a couple of volunteers the search is commenced lantern in hand. Groping our way over stones and stumps of fallen timber, seldom all three on our legs together, we quickly near the light, and reach it, to be disappointed and amused at the same time.

The source of the glow is a fire of logs kindled under the shelter of an upturned canoe. Stretched between the boat and a rude scaffolding of poles is a *tente d'abri* of coarse matting; and sprawling round the fire, in attitudes the reverse of picturesque, are some half dozen natives.

Paterfamilias, perceiving our approach, has sprung up, and is screeching some unintelligible gibberish at his somnolent off-spring, while he casts about him for his bow. No time is to be lost if we wish to avoid a practical proof of his skill as an archer, so we make a simultaneous onslaught upon the unhappy child of the forest.

"We don't mean yer no 'arm!" vociferates the burly coxswain; but the poor wretch only struggles the more, convinced that his last hour has come.

Meanwhile, the hideous brood are upon us; and, for a few seconds, our position, assailed right and left by

the gentle daughters of Eve and a squalling progeny, is far from enviable. At last, however, a chaw of bacee from my pouch quiets them, and we sit down round the embers to palaver. It is no easy task to describe the sublime ugliness of these unfortunate mortals. Spare, wizen, monkey-like, squatting among the damp fern and limp, half-cured deer-skins which form their unsavoury bed-place, how immeasurably better off are the beasts of the forest than they! Despite the coldness of the weather, they are but thinly clad; and poor shivering burnt-umber coloured humanity proclaims itself from many a rent in their scanty garments.

While I moralise thus, an ingenius code of explanatory signs, verbal gymnastics, and the deaf and dumb alphabet, is being exercised by my companions, in the vain hope of extracting some news of our ship-mates from mine host.

Just as we are on the point of giving up the endeavour in despair, a rustling in the bush above transfixes us; and soon, to my intense relief, the "deer-stalkers" crawl into the encampment, more dead than alive.

Instinctively we grasp their ice-cold hands and draw them to the fire, with incoherent words of welcoine and congratulation; and then, before another sentence is uttered, a liberal "drop of the creature" is administered on medicinal grounds.

Somewhat revived by its cheering influence, the "patients" stretch their half-starved limbs before the warmth, and proceed to recount their adventures.

It is the old story. Having fired at and, as they believed, wounded a deer, they had followed him, on and on through the woods, taking no heed of the fast

falling night. After wading torrents, splashing through marshes, and scaling precipices until they were tired out and every cartridge was wet, they had found themselves in the gloom of the primeval forest, some four miles from the ship and without matches, at eight o'clock at night.

In attempting to return in the darkness they had narrowly missed breaking their necks; and after weary marching and countermarching, slipping down water-courses, and stumbling at every step over obstacles formidable in the daylight, and doubly dangerous at night, they had been fain to take refuge under a projecting rock, fearing to move lest worse things befall them.

But the icy blasts soon admonished them to be moving if they did not wish to be frozen to death; and so they had spent the night, sometimes wandering aimlessly on at the imminent risk of their necks, sometimes crouching together under the lee of a bush, until they had spied the Indians' encampment. And being here, they very roundly swore that never, no, never, would they risk such another night in the forest. Torn, bleeding, hungry, dazed with the cold and darkness, they certainly presented a pitiable appearance; and I am inclined to think they will keep their vow.

For half an hour more we sit talking over the fire; the horrific grunts of mine host and his two spouses more than ever convincing us that we have fallen among harmless, but hopeless, maniacs.

The first streaks of morning are in the eastern sky as we bid them adieu; and as we stumble away through the doubtful gray light, the strident tones of the savage are heard addressing a few words to his wives, of which we easily conceive the import.

So we reach the boat, and arrive on board just in

time to hear the order, "Hands shorten in cable." Soon the anchor is tripped, and we are softly stealing out of harbour; a shrill screech as we pass the Indian encampment bids us farewell, and the little bay is left for perhaps another decade to its pristine solitude. The day is bright and fine, and our artist-soul is stirred to try and transfer some faint representation of the views through which we are passing to canvas. With some such idea we are on deck all the morning "sketching from Nature." Would that I could give the reader a notion of the matchless panorama through which we are moving. Word-painting must always be incomplete and unsatisfactory where the object of it is, beyond words, beautiful—else imagine all that is most glorious in the cliffy Hebrides, of dancing water, seaweed-covered rock, and hanging wood, enhanced by the mysterious blue which distant hills and eternal snows give to Alpine scenery. Alternate these with park-like tracts, such as Thames meanders through between Iffley and Cookham, but without the stiffness begotten of hedge-row and chessboard squares of turnips, and perhaps a faint conception of the pictures we would fain be drawing may be formed.

"Kelp right ahead, sir!" sings out a voice from the masthead; and simultaneously there is a grating noise under the bows, a sudden shock, which upsets my easel, and the nose of the ship slides upwards upon a sunken shoal, where the chart says thirty fathoms. Before we have time to realise the gravity of the situation the engines are racing full speed astern, and we have the satisfaction of seeing that she is moving off. She leaks slightly, but is otherwise little damaged, and we resume our journey—with diminished confidence in the charts, and at a very slow speed, however.

As the latitude increases, bergs and floating fields of ice add a new danger to the voyage ; and whales are seen more frequently.

On, through Icy Reach, Innocentes Channel, and Guia Narrows, until late in the evening Peurto Beuno affords us a berth for the night. Here such a draught of cod and whiting is caught as keeps the ship's company in fresh fish for a week.

Two more days' hard steaming brings us to Magellan Straits, which are too well known to need description. The weather is too cold now for comfort, and we don our winter garb, and make all snug for the wilder Atlantic waves which we are soon to enter.

Summing up our impressions of Smythe's Channel, we conclude that, to the artist, the sportsman, the lover of free Nature for her own sake or the man of science, the adjoining districts offer a new and glorious field for exploration ; but to the merchant or man of business as such, it is to be feared that they will long remain of very doubtful value.

TWO DAYS IN THE DESERT.

I.

IMAGINATION.

IT chanced, no matter how, that we four sat quaffing our *café Arabe* one spring evening, beneath the trellised vines of a certain village hostelry not a thousand miles from the city of Tunis.

The population of the little African seaport, a picturesque medley of Oriental and Greek, were met together upon the beach before us for their customary evening stroll. Drowsy songs of Moorish boatmen, as they hauled in their nets, fell, not displeasingly, upon our ears. Ever and anon, from the cupola of a neighbouring mosque, a sleepy mueddin flung out his summons to all true believers. Doves of meek-eyed camels cast their uncouth bulk upon the sands; while their drivers, erst so noisy, knelt, each pious Moslem on his strip of carpet, to pay his evening devotions to Allah and the Prophet.

The sun setting over the low western hills lit up the vessels alongside the Mole, imparting a flitting glory to the rough Sicilian fishing-craft and piratical-looking feluccas from Tripoli and the Levant. Two faithful hounds crouched at our feet, nosing from time to time

the plethoric game-bags which they had so well assisted us to fill. A mere glance at those game-bags was enough to put the very mediocre sportsmen whose prowess had stuffed them on the best of terms with themselves, and to imbue them with benevolence towards the whole human race. A post-prandial satisfaction possessed their souls, nor were lacking the fumes of that weed which maketh glad the heart of man.

The four kindred spirits who graced that festive board were—but no, they shall not be pilloried before the public gaze in their own ancestral names. Remembering what is to come, this writer would die rather than divulge *that* secret.

A marine imp of some fifteen summers, much given to unseasonable mirth, shall be to the reader of this strange eventful history a midshipmite, and nothing more.

Herakles is a decent disguise for another, whose thews and sinews were the envy of his peers.

A medical gentleman reported to be very *very* terrible when roused, whose gigantic intellect was (like that of Napoleon I., as he is fond of reminding us) wedded to a comparatively small person, may safely be alluded to as the Doctor.

The identity of that rarest of good fellows, the ecclesiastic, who completed this quatrain, shall be extinguished by a cowl. We will call him Friar John.

We have already intimated that it was *after dinner*. No one who has sat at “the laird’s” table after a hard day’s grouse-driving; or who, after toiling all day with heavy salmon-rod, seeks the welcome ingle-nook of some snug Caledonian inn, to compare notes and fly-hooks with a fellow piscator; or who, having wrested

victory from some clipping thirty-tonner, leaves his bonnie bark at anchor off the familiar yacht club stairs, to dine and fight the battle o'er again in that pleasant caravanserai—no one, in short, who knows human nature will doubt which turn the conversation took.

Do men discuss the binomial theorem at a bump-supper? or the Burials Bill at a Lord Mayor's banquet? Are not the prospects of the "Varsity match," and the remarkable absence of calapash in the turtle more probably the respective topics at those feasts of reason?

Of course, we talked of shooting. And after each sportsman had explained how impossible it would have been for "the best shot in Christendom, sir," to have hit "*that bird*," which he, the speaker, missed—after each had compared by inference his own remarkably good shooting with the very so-so practice of his neighbours (an invariable custom of even the most charitable of men when field-sports are upon the *tapis*)—then was the time for the cunning medicine-man to ask, with well-feigned nonchalance,

"Have any of you fellows done any big game shooting?"

The Friar looked shocked, and said "No!" emphatically. But why his reverence should have regarded the extermination of the larger *feræ naturæ* as a high crime and misdemeanour, seeing that he viewed with a very lenient eye the wholesale slaughter of unoffending quails, deponent knoweth not.

"Nature," he would say, in defence of this inconsistency, "has clearly designed that the *genus homo* shall eat quails, and be eaten by lions. The man who flies in the face of this unwritten law, by attempting to prey upon lions, deserves his fate when the king of beasts assimilates him."

The ingenuous midshipman observed in reply to the big-game question that he had fired several shots at a porpoise, "if that counts; but," added the youth, with a blush, "I'm not sure that I hit him."

The man of thews said nothing, because, as a matter of fact, he never had held on anything bigger than a rabbit. But if looks went for anything, his companions were free to suppose that our Herakles was mentally reckoning up the number of head of lion and rhinoceros who had fallen victims to his bow and spear.

Imperceptibly the subject of big-game shooting glided into a discussion *on** *the wild delights of a roving life in uncivilised lands*. Upon this inspiring theme the dullest of us waxed eloquent. Had the speakers been Messrs. Mungo Park, Burton, Speke, and Samuel Baker, instead of—well, four individuals who, whatever may be their present exalted positions, were not then shining lights in the Central African Exploration Society, their flights of rhetoric could scarcely have soared higher as they enlarged upon it.

If Mr. Stanley of the *New York Herald* had chanced our way while the Doctor was dilating upon a scheme for opening up the sources of the Zambesi (he spoke of it as if it were a surgical operation), that indefatigable journalist must have seized the little man's hand, and wasted upon him his world-famous "Dr. Livingstone, I believe?"

The enthusiasm was at its height; each vied with each in endeavouring to make it clear that, of all types of human existence, the life of a dweller in tents--of a Bedouin, of a Krim Tartar, of a scourer of the trackless-

* Attention is drawn to these words, because they formed a stock phrase of our Herakles, and one for whose use he paid full dear in time to come.

wastes of the desert—was dearest to his soul. Where lavish panegyric failed, noise took its place. Everybody spoke at once. “Think of glorious nights around the camp-fire,” suggested the Doctor. “And the tales of some good Haroun al Raschid,” continued the mid-shipmite. “And the maddening chase of the wild-boar amongst the spurs of the Atlas,” roared Herakles. “And the *dolce far niente* of the midday rest beneath the fan-palms of the green oasis,” hinted, in the gentlest tones, Friar John.

The solemn Turks must have taken the party for Nazarene Dervishes working the steam up. Doubtless they momentarily expected to see us leap to our feet and whirl “about in reel and rout,” with coat-tails streaming out, meteor-like, at right angles to our persons.

Why the Doctor should have chosen to burst his bomb-shell amongst us at this particular juncture, goodness knows. The effect of that one ill-timed remark of his upon our spirits was as water unto fire, or as an extinguisher to a candle. It destroyed at one fell swoop the peace of mind of his companions and the hopes of those sons of Islam who thought to see us dance. The latter, seeing us to be quite chap-fallen, departed grumbling, leaving the Friar repeating blankly, “Three A.M. to-morrow; can he really mean it?”

So have we heard, on board the crazy steam craft which convey the sickly sons of Cockaigne from London Bridge to Southend, a minstrel youth fling out some stirring ballad of the sea, telling mayhap of “the wind that blows, the ship that goes, and the lass that loves a sailor,” or eke of the delights of a pirate bold, or of some good ship “rolling home, rolling home, rolling home across the sea.”

Then has he that listened to those most untuneful strains watched awhile also. And behold, Nemesis ! For when the wind *did* blow and the ship *did* roll, the songster would be heard no more, I ween. Pale as death would grow his cheek ; and—ah me!—the harp he loved (it was an accordion, but no matter) spoke no more that journey. For the ocean claimed her own.

Yes ; had we been that sea-sick vocalist, the change from gay to grave could not have been more complete as the Doctor cried cheerily :

“ Well, my dear fellows, I *knew* you would be of my mind in this matter. Come, applaud my promptitude ! Camels are ordered, and I have arranged for a start at 3 A.M. to-morrow. The captain will give us leave for four days—not very long, I own, but still time enough to enable us to form some idea of camp-life.”

Observing the marked long elongation of jaw with which these tidings were received, the little man continued, speaking very fast, “ We will stop the first night at Kairideen,—of course you know where Kairideen is ? ”

He to whom this query was addressed nodded an affirmative, not because he did know, but because the cold eye of the medico said, as plain as words could speak, “ The man who is ignorant of the whereabouts of Kairideen must be a deplorable idiot.”

“ There we shall see the tomb of Dido and the remains of a Phoenician aqueduct of fabulous antiquity,” whispered he to Friar John, who dabbled in archæology. “ And should the boar not be plentiful there,” added the tempter aloud, “ we have only to push on to Sidi-Koom, on the confines of the Sahara. Its neighbourhood is famous for lions ” (infamous,

thinks at least one of his hearers, who feigns immense delight); “and as the district is infested by jackals and leopards” (the knees of the listeners are loosened with dismay), “as well as overrun by boars, we are sure—quite sure—of good sport.”

“But, my dear friend——” protested the Friar feebly.

“*But me no buts, reverend sir!* My purpose to start at 3 A.M. is as fixed as the stars!” Then, *sotto voce*: “The country teems with archæological treasures. Think of a temple of Nisroch turned successfully into an amphitheatre by the Carthaginians, and a fortress by the Romans (the younger Scipio pitched his camp there).”

The worthy man’s mouth watered visibly. Visions of his own humble name, dignified by affixes of mysterious grandeur, beginning with F.R., floated before his mind’s eye. What a paper he would be able to send home to the *Quarterly*, on the “Limits of the Carthaginian Empire under Gensem!” What a flood of light might not this journey throw on the vexed question of the religion of the ancient Punic race!

Nevertheless he still hesitated. “I should like it of all things,” he explained; “but I know that as sure as my name is Asterisk, I shall get sunstroke or rheumatism, according as the weather turns out wet or dry.”

“And pray, my excellent friend,” inquired our medical man haughtily, “shall not *I* be at your side to administer the convenient ‘Cockle’ or the gruesome ‘Gregory?’ I assure you I have taken plenty for all four of us.”

“He is taking plenty for all four of us,” echoed the midshipman, as if he was going to cry.

"Now this is so like the Doctor; so *very* like him! Might I be allowed to ask the chair whether *provisions* for *four persons* are also amply supplied?" demanded the man of muscle.

"Certainly; nothing has been forgotten. Let me see: potted meats, potatoes, ham, *pâté-de-foie-gras*, Bass's bitter, champagne, aerated waters, *eau-de-vie*, &c. There's the list of contents of the camel-packs" (tendering a lengthy catalogue to our Herakles). "Read them."

The latter shook his head in a manner to indicate that he was more grieved than angry.

"Thank you, I have heard *quite* enough," sighed he. Then turning to address us with the air of a judge reluctantly summing-up the *prima-facie* evidence of a murder case. "You observe that he provides camels, victuals, drink, and *materia medica* for *all four* of us before *he dreams* of asking whether we care to go; and now I'll be bound he'll be quite upset if we refuse to join him in what I can only *stigmatise* as a wild goose chase. Yes, I repeat, a wild goose chase!"

"I knew enough of your character, my Herakles, to feel sure you would jump at a chance of tasting, if even for a few days, *the wild delights of a roving life in uncivilised lands*," retorted the Doctor, with a strong accent on the last few words.

The unhappy Herakles smiled a ghastly smile at this superfluity of naughtiness on the part of the chair.

However, his question had the effect of bringing very clearly before the two others the unpleasant fact that, unless they quickly concerted some more vigorous measures of opposition, they were infallibly destined to be led forth into the wilderness like the children

of Israel, by a diminutive, but most determined, Moses.

The nearness of the impending danger roused even the midshipman from an unctuous examination of the list of contents of the camel-packs.

That malicious imp, in a style of Eastern allegory, which he has much affected since our sojourn in this stronghold of Islam, compared the motion of the "ships of the desert" to that of the ships which ply the Straits of Dover.

"The effect upon your inside, my Herakles," whispered he to the worst sailor in the party, "*is identical, only more so.*"

"Then," said the other, striking a statuesque attitude, indicative of unyielding resolution, "if that is really so, no earthly consideration shall induce me to surmount the angular back of a camel."

"I have always been informed," continued the heartless boy, not heeding this interruption, "that the camel is the most vindictive quadruped, and is given to lunching off the legs of its rider."

"Kindness," said our friend the Friar, in reply to this disquieting statement, "will cure any amount of vice. I shall stroke and pet my camel into a friendly frame of mind."

"You might just as well stroke the dome of St. Paul's to propitiate the Dean and Chapter," quoted he of the unseasoned inside.

The Friar put the question to the chair, "whether the water on these occasions is not carried in bottles made out of the interiors of beasts;" and being informed that such was the case, observed resignedly, "Then I know that I shall suffer tortures of thirst before my proud stomach submits to retain the horrid stuff."

“When thermometer's 200 in the sun,
In the sun,
That water's smell is not a pleasant one,
Pleasant one.”

chanted the midshipmite inconsequently.

“Permit me to inform the last speaker that the solution of tannin which gives the pungent smell” (“Pungent?” interpolated the frivolous boy derisively) “to which he refers, is highly beneficial to the system,” said our *Æsculapius* soothingly.

I have never ceased to marvel at the docility with which we permitted ourselves to be partners in this mad enterprise. But, to cut a long story short, the meeting repaired on board the ship to which its several members belonged at 11 P.M.; the professor's face triumphant, the countenances of the rest of us expressive of anything but joy. For we had pledged our sacred words to start at 3 A.M. the following day.

CHAPTER II.

REALITY.

SPARE me to tell what preparations the several members of the expedition made for this journey. What weapons were taken (they were many), what changes of raiment, what quantity of victuals and drink, are none of the reader's business. I may mention, however, that when the caravan halted at the end of the first day's journey, it was discovered that the only wrap of any description of which Friar John could boast was an ecclesiastical vestment yclept a pocket surplice. The good creature affected to be vastly put out at this oversight on the part of his *valet-de-chambre*. This writer is, however, by no means certain that the Friar did not expressly stipulate for a pocket surplice to be packed up in his travelling-bag. Whether this garment represented the closest match to an Arab burnouse which his scanty wardrobe afforded, or whether the worthy man had some premonition that he might be required in sacerdotal capacity to administer what biographers call the "last offices" to those of us who were destined to fall victims to the lion and the bear, it is difficult to say.

Our Herakles spent half the busy night preceding the start in culling from books of African travel and adventure such interjections in the Arabian and Turkish tongues as seemed likely in his eyes to be of service to wanderers like ourselves. These he strung together,

regardless of all grammar, in the form of two short sentences. One, expressive of goodwill towards all mankind, he termed his *benediction*. The other, expressive of—no matter what, he called his *anathema*. And it must be admitted that the anathema, at least, always seemed perfectly intelligible to those sons of the Sahara against whom it was fulminated.

The Doctor, more wise than the rest, provided himself with a huge white-cotton umbrella, to the circumference of which he sewed curtains, until it presented the appearance of some mysterious under-garment. When on the march, this was planted at our leader's saddle-bow, like the mystic bough of the Argonauts : and he might be heard addressing it from time to time, in fearful German gutturals, whenever his camel jolted more violently than was pleasant.

At last all preparations were completed. By midnight the camel-packs were loaded, and placed ready to go into the native boat, which was to take the expedition on shore in the morning. The midshipman had his banjo by his side—Heaven bless the youth for that good thought! The Doctor, a most inveterate whist-player, deposited a pack of cards in his valise, cheek by jowl with an enormous box of “antibilious pills.” Herakles committed his Arabic anathema to his memory, and himself to the arms of Morpheus. The expedition slept.

I now approach—not without certain misgivings that this pen may fail to do justice to the solemnity of the event—the START. The word is printed in capital letters, after the abominable custom of the *Daily Intelligencer*, because it must be admitted that the graphic author of this veracious narrative is at a loss to convey by any other means an adequate notion of the

magnitude of the undertaking in the eyes of those about to go through with it.

Let me draw a veil over the touching farewell paid by each of us in succession to the solitary officer whom duty compelled to be on deck at that untimely hour.

The lonely one expressed sorrow that he had not had the good fortune to be one of us.

"Good fortune?" sighed the Friar, thinking regretfully of the warm bed he had just left.

"The good fortune on these occasions has always struck me as being quite the other way," said the man of thews, trying to mimic our Doctor's cynicism, with about as much success as if he had attempted to wriggle his burly shoulders into the little man's coat.

"Very true, my Herakles," said the medico with a fine air of approval. "Don't tell *me* that his brother officers so consummately envy young 'Slapdash,' told off to lead the 'forlorn hope.' The anxiety of the soldier to attain a prominent position in the imminent deadly breach is great, very great, I daresay, but" (winking sardonically), "it is not absolutely unconquerable."

The "three groans for the Doctor," which this monstrous calumny upon the sons of Mars so well-deserved, was on the point of being delivered, when a horrid crash transfixed the whole of us.

"Goodness me, what was that?" ejaculated the entire party, with a fearful presentiment of what had happened.

Perhaps it was the darkness. We would remind the "gentlemen of England who live at home at ease" that, so far as absence of daylight is concerned, 3 A.M. and midnight are synonymous terms.

Perhaps it was the darkness, we repeat, which caused

that turbaned ruffian to stumble under the precious pack containing our store of liquids. But whatever the reason, it is certain that the *crash* sounded the knell of a very large portion of those good glass bottles whose contents were to have cheered and invigorated the thirsty souls of the wayfarers.

“Inshallah, bismillah ! Dog of a Moslem, haideen empsheen, gibby-a-ash !” bellowed the man of muscle, playing off his maiden anathema upon the prostrate Turk. “The beggar certainly understands me,” added he, complacently ; “look how angry it’s made him.”

And, indeed, such a storm of muffled comminations issued from beneath the camel-pack, that the Doctor, fearing apoplexy, recommended an application of *the benediction* instanter.

This brilliant prescription on the part of the faculty was accordingly complied with, with the best results.

The mollified boatman arose, his flanks steaming with excisable liquids “as they had basted been,” and struggled down into the boat with his limp and leaking burden. We had no time to open the pack and ascertain the extent of the damage, as, by a singular piece of misfortune, this was the last thing to go. The rest of our impedimenta, being underneath it, were, of necessity, as saturated with wine as a tipsy-cake. But let that pass. A solemn assurance having been exacted from the Doctor that nothing had been forgotten, the “hoarse word of command” was given, and the expedition started for the shore.

The dragoman, one Ali, had been ordered to meet us with seven camels, two drivers, and all necessaries for our journey unprocurable on board the ship, at the landing-place.

It was a long and weary pull to shore, and day was breaking before the boat had accomplished it.

"I hope the dragoman won't have gone away again," said our leader dubiously; "it's rather late."

"There's not a vestige of a camel on the Mole, anyhow," answered the Friar gloomily, with a sandwich in his mouth and a telescope to his eye. We all munched those juiceless and flabby sandwiches by the way, by medical advice. As to appetite at that unseasonable hour, we had none.

"Give me the glass, Friar," demanded his three hearers in a breath. It was passed from hand to hand, like the eye of the Three Gray Sisters; but as it failed to reveal so much as a camel's hump, the party relapsed into a heavy silence.

At length we landed. An aged Moor with Bardolphian nose got up from the rusty anchor-stock on which he had been ruminating, and salaamed as we approached. This was Ali the dragoman. His name was unfortunate, for he proved a very poor ally to us. In a word, he was dear to us, only in the commercial sense of that word.

"Bismillah, Ali! and where are the camels?" inquired our leader; "order them round at once."

The Moor bowed the knee once more in a manner highly gratifying to the dignity of the Doctor, and departed to do the little man's behests, while the members of the expedition sat down in a circle upon their paraphernalia, to wait.

Half an hour passed (I mention the time in proof of the Job-like patience of the party); the sun rose and shone with African fierceness upon their backs; but still no plaint escaped them. Did I say none? Yes, *one* moan there was. It was when Herakles said

something jocularly (Heaven save the mark!) about his being "a patient Grizzel patiently grizzling."

At the end of that time, six of the most miserable and attenuated specimens of the genus *dromedarius camelus* which this writer has ever seen shambled down to the beach. With them one would have reversed the proverb, and said that it was the *first* straw which, to judge by appearances, would break their backs. No very prodigious stretch of imagination was required to conceive those lank and lean beasts squeezing through a good-sized needle's eye. Two were, moreover, somewhat lame, and all were thickly plastered, from their shoulders downwards, with mud and *débris* of the stables.

The leader of the expedition eyed them contemptuously for a few seconds, and then demanded to know whether these were the best animals procurable. The rest the while maintained a stolid silence. Their misery was too deep for speech.

Ali, however, with more vigour than from his aged appearance one would have supposed him to possess, commenced strapping the packs upon those wretched quadrupeds. He laid about him too on both the drivers to such good purpose, that in an incredibly short space of time the expedition was wending slowly out into the deserts, to the impressive strains of the midshipman's banjo, its track being marked for a good mile by the still dripping pack of fluids.

Then was the time to discover what had been forgotten, and of course the following trifles were found wanting.

"Where were the dogs?" inquired Herakles.

"The dogs? Why, there! Don't you see them?" pointing to his two spaniels, Dash and Ponto.

"No, no! the boarhounds, I mean, Doctor. Your dogs are no use for big-game shooting. You surely don't mean to say you've not arranged to bring any decent sized dogs?"

"I thought Ali would have provided them," expostulated the unhappy medicine-man. But his inquisitor was not to be put off in this manner.

"There, there!" he said, grimly, "you never thought of asking. It doesn't matter, of course; only our chances of getting big game without proper dogs are *nil*, absolutely *nil*, that's all."

"Well, and I'm very glad to hear it," said the Friar, candidly.

So was the midshipman, but he spake not. After this unfortunate passage of arms, the expedition relapsed once more into painful silence, the Doctor ruffled, Friar John anxious, Herakles querulous, and the midshipman dormant. Twenty minutes passed before the second awful discovery was made.

"Ali, where are the *tents*?" inquired Herakles, whose confidence in our leader's qualifications for the important post he occupied had now been greatly diminished.

Ali had not brought any, and admitted the fact without a blush. Clearly he had supposed the expedition would provide its own. The man of thews could contain himself no longer.

"Do you *hear* this? Doctor do you *understand* that there are *no tents*? For my own part, I don't so much mind it; but think of Friar John with his rheumatism sleeping out in these heavy dews! Remember, too, that I am responsible to his father for that infant's health, and he's got a touch of influenza already; besides, we're all morally certain to be moon-

struck (though of course that can't hurt *you!*). Really, it's too bad. Did you order tents?"

The doctor paled visibly under this question.

"Why, of course I did," stammered he; "that is, I certainly intended—Where's that beggar Ali?"

Ali trotted his camel within shouting distance, and smiled a servile smile.

"O villain, villain! smiling—" (he *said* it but this writer won't repeat it) "villain!" quoted the medical gentleman, in an ecstasy of rage. "Why didn't you provide tents? Did I not tell you?"

The ancient shook his head, and much mutual-recrimination followed; but, as the midshipman observed, with one of his hideous guffaws, *that* did not mend matters." Which, indeed, was painfully obvious.

We had made good but a very few miles, when the capering beast bestrode by that young gentleman exhibited premonitory signs of vice. It was a female.

Its evil propensities manifested themselves at first by a decided reluctance to advance. The driver's nostrums to cure an attack of "the vapours" in a lady camel appeared to be two in number. The first was a liberal use of Arabic execrations shouted at the utmost pitch of the voice; the second an equally liberal application of a thick stick to the obstinate quadruped's forelegs.

Having exhausted his entire stock of bad language to no purpose upon the brute, the man proceeded to apply his magic wand to its knees with such goodwill as to cause the sufferer to give vent to horrid shrieks of pain and rage. This exercise he continued until the wretched animal broke into a doubtful trot, and regained its position in the caravan.

No sooner, however, was the driver perched once

more upon his own beast, than the cantankerous creature commenced its tricks over again.

"She will do it!" groaned the unlucky midshipman upon its back.

The amusement which the idiosyncrasies of that camel afforded us at first gradually gave way to disgust. Sometimes, when it had dropped very far to the rear, its despairing rider would resort to the transparent artifice of holding a bunch of dates before its nose at the end of a stick. This ruse, however, proved quite ineffective, the only result being that the disappointed creature would crane its long neck sideways, and bring its teeth within a few inches of its tempter's shuddering calves.

The camel-driver would then dismount, and a skirmish of about a quarter of an hour would ensue, at the end of which time the beast might perhaps be prevailed upon to proceed for a few hundred yards at a hand-gallop. Its motions at such times was a sort of polka-mazurka. It moved ahead *per saltem*, by leaps and bounds, as Mr. Gladstone is wont to say of the revenue under a Liberal Administration.

The countenance of the midshipman under these circumstances was a sight to make the angels weep. That agonised young man would clasp his arms round its hump in an attitude expressive of an affection which was the very opposite of his real sentiments towards the brute.

So we journeyed on until noon, by which time the expedition was like to drop with hunger and fatigue; yet still the indomitable Doctor led us forward.

After a silence, broken only by the soft thud of the camel's flat feet into the sand, of fully half an hour, the Friar said :

"I see the barometer has fallen fully two-tenths (that is meteorological language for one-fifth) of an inch. I fear we shall have rain."

He had provided himself with a miniature aneroid, on whose storm warnings he placed implicit reliance.

His reverence was one of those rare ones who, like the White Knight, would like to have travelled with a beehive, in case we might meet any bees.

"Ah," said the Doctor with a superior smile, "the reverend gentleman has caught a mare's nest! On the confines of the Sahara," continued he, with the air of a Lecturer to the College of Surgeons, "rain is almost unknown; but *if*," incredulously, "the glass has really fallen decimal two of an inch, then mark my words, we are in for a simoom."

The immediate effect of this terrible prognostication was a motion advanced by the Friar, "that this expedition do at once return."

"To you," he said, pointedly, "whose duty and pleasure it is to seek the 'bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth,' to you who 'sweep through the deep while the stormy winds do blow,' it may perhaps matter little whether your bones are left to whiten the desert to-day, or whether you fulfil your destinies as food for powder a few years hence; as for me, a man of peace, I prefer that my ossuary remnants should be deposited in the family vault;" and he turned in act to go.

Now was the time for the midshipman (who was behind, as usual) to prove that, if his camel was devoid of virtue, its rider had enough for both.

That heroic imp sheered alongside the pusillanimous Friar and delivered his broadside. A portion only of the arguments he used are on record, but they proved

so satisfactory that the deserter returned to his allegiance, and the march continued.

"*Humanum est errare,*" hinted the youth ; "the Doctor is not infallible in his weather forecasts, neither is your reverence always wrong ; and as a matter of fact, Ali has just assured me that the worst we have to fear is a good soaking. It *is* going to rain."

"Do you really think so ?" said the other, visibly comforted.

"If I did not, if I for one moment supposed that the simoom was about to exhale his deadly breath, do you suppose that I should not have seconded your motion ?"

This seemed tolerably convincing. But our nerves had sustained an ugly shock. Even Herakles scanned the horizon anxiously from time to time, as if he momentarily expected to view the "ravaged landscape mingling with the skies."

The caravan now surmounted a low range of hills. From this coign of vantage one might espy the ruins of the Phoenician aqueduct, which we knew to be our bourne.

"Let the camp be pitched under yonder cactus-hedge," cried our despotic chieftain. "We will remain here to-night."

Nothing loth, his famished followers slid off their patient beasts. He of the rubicund proboscis spread our rugs in the cool sweet shade, and proceeded to prepare our meal, for it was long past lunch-time.

And now, while the pack-saddles were being rifled of their appetising contents, while the kettle sang in the embers and the meat turned on the spit, while the glory of a landscape full of classic associations extended

far as eye could reach, the good Friar John was in his element.

Pointing to one after another of the lumps of crumbling masonry about us, he peopled the plain with shadowy forms from the dust of forgotten centuries. 'Twas the happiest blending of history and romance.

Far away to the north-east he showed us the rough outline of Cape Carthage. Under his gentle necromancy we almost saw the legions of Rome advancing on the doomed town. This very road, he told us, resounded with their martial tread ; the bray of trumpets and the shock of battle were almost in our ears. Then he drew such a word-picture of the birth of Dido's ancient city, as called to mind a certain Turner, standing, if we remember right, in a murky corner of the National Gallery. The familiar glow of rich mysterious haze, the half-suggested piles of marble, and shimmer of blue waters laden with huge quinquerimes, was before us while he rambled on.

Who but our Orpheus should then take his lyre (the youth had a sweet tenor voice, an excellent thing in a midshipman), and cheer our souls with song.

He sang of the gallant frigate Arethusa, dear to all nautical hearts, and of the maid who dwelt "by the banks cf Allan Water," and of how she loved and lost ; and last he sang of the pleasures of the chase and of hound and of horn in the morning. And at his singing (shade of Charles Kingsley, forgive me !) the stately camels nodded their tall heads, and the Arabs gathered round and clapped their skinny hands in unison, and the rest heeded not the sun and the flies, and all the petty troubles that beset them, as they laughed and shouted in the chorus of that mighty song.

Then to luncheon ; a goodly meal did that appear, I wis, spread out beneath the cactus-hedge. But where were the drinkables ?

“ What, ho ! Ah, thou naughty varlet, bring straight-way four stoups of ale. Hast forgotten the liquids ? ”

Thus the Doctor “ in merry pin.”

“ Where’s the beer ? ” inquired the more matter-of-fact Herakles.

The dragoman thus accosted produced from the pack three bottles, which he placed solemnly upon the sand beside us. Two of these were dropsical-looking glass things, containing, perhaps, half a pint of soda-water apiece. The third, however, was labelled I.P.A., and we hailed it with a cordial shout of welcome.

“ Bring some more beer, Ali, bring some more ! ” cried the medico expansively.

The ancient bowed his turbaned head until the red nose almost touched the ground, but he did not budge.

Glances of dismay were exchanged between the Friar and Herakles. “ From that man’s manner,” said the latter, after gazing stonily at the dragoman for some seconds, “ I gather that there is no more beer ! ”

The midshipman ran to the reeking pack to try the truth of this.

An involuntary wail of horror escaped him, for sure enough not another bottle remained unbroken.

I forbear to record the language made use of by the expedition on receipt of this awful news. Herakles seized an earthfast stone, and projected it at the deceptively bulky pack, to work off his superfluous choler. The Friar, although he bore the bitter blow without a murmur, still seemed to have “ great dispositions to cry.” Even the marine imp looked glum ; while as for the Doctor, he rose to his feet, retired a little

space apart, and communed with his umbrella, in some mysterious tongue (he said it was Chocktaw), like one possessed.

The question now arose, how should we divide the little remnant? First we proposed to cast lots for that precious bottle of Bass; but as each remembered that three to one is long odds, this scheme was vetoed without more ado. Then a brilliant notion struck the midshipman. "Make it into shandy-gaff," said he, "using the soda-water as ginger-pop!"

This was accordingly done; and the four parched travellers had to content themselves with a glass of diluted pale ale apiece—the merest drop in the ocean of their prodigious thirstiness. When it was gone, when the last gill (whatever that may amount to) had been swallowed, the members of the expedition, if they had not glared at one another with glassy eyes expressive of unutterable drought, would have been more than mortal.

"Shall we try the water-skins?" said Friar John, at last, like a shipwrecked seaman proposing that last resource of famine—cannibalism—to his fellow-castaways.

No one answered.

"I think we shall have to try the water-skins," repeated the poor man, looking round for sympathy.

"I suppose it amounts to that," replied Herakles, eyeing the shapeless things with palpable disgust. The midshipman groaned audibly, and muttered something about "knowing the worst."

"Ali, bring one tumblerful of the water for medical inspection," said the Doctor, with a laudable effort at facetiousness.

A large earthenware bowl was accordingly produced,

containing something which (perhaps because it was wet, and resembled no other known liquid) the drago-man called water.

"It requires no chemical analysis to establish the fact that *that* fluid is unfit for human use," said Herakles, holding his nose.

Even the medico admitted the percentage of tannin to be excessive. "But still," said he, boldly gulping down half a teaspoonful, "it is not positively nauseous."

"Well," said our Friar, making the best of a bad job, "our wisest course is to make tea of it; boiling, I am told, destroys all germs of animalculæ."

"Let four quarts of tea be prepared, then, by 7 P.M.," commanded our leader, with a wry face. "And now, my dear friends, for a shot at a boar! We have three good hours of daylight. What think you, my Herakles? How shall we arrange it? How would it be now," continued he, persuasively, "for *you* to take the dogs and the midshipman" ("Observe the order of precedence—*dogs* and *midshipman*," interpolated the insulted imp)—"dogs and midshipman," went on the Doctor, not deigning to notice this interruption, "and make a *détour* across the valley? When you reached the crest of the opposite hill you might *sweep* away to the right" (this with a wave of his hand, as though to indicate that the distance to be traversed was the merest *bagatelle*)—"you might sweep away to the right, and so return through those olive-groves to the encampment. The Friar and myself, by taking up our positions in yonder patch of melons, would be well placed to cut off any boar which you started amongst the brushwood."

Accordingly Herakles and the midshipman, guns in

hand and dogs ahead, trudged off meekly enough on their *détour*.

"The beauty of this arrangement, reverend Friar," explained the perfidious medicine-man as soon as the others were out of earshot, "is that you and I shall be able to sit in that melon patch, like Jonah under his gourds, while our friends yonder have a weary six-mile tramp before them. See what a thing it is to have an individual at the head of affairs with a gift for organisation."

An hour passed during which time the heavens grew black with cloud. Herakles, whose bulky proportions had now dwindled to a grey speck, was then perceived to discharge his piece. Immediately afterwards the report of the midshipman's deadly weapon was distinguished, and a confused yelping of dogs and shouting came down upon the breeze.

"They've fired at something—I hope it's not a lion," said the Friar, raising his glass to his eye with a tremulous hand. "Dear me! I didn't know that one of the drivers was with them."

The Doctor was standing on a friendly boulder viewing the action, like Bonaparte, with folded arms.

"What's that? what's that?" cried he. "For Heaven's sake, Friar John, give me the glass! I do believe they're attacked by Bedouins. As I'm alive, that black thing was an Arab tent. Yes, look at that *savage* gesticulating with a curtle-axe."

However, as a most careful survey failed to reveal more than one enemy, the leader of the expedition contented himself with precautionary measures.

"We must be prepared to defend the camp to the death, Friar," said he, firmly. "I suppose, in a case of

this sort, you would not mind taking an active part—firing a rifle, I mean?"

"I'd rather not," replied the embarrassed ecclesiastic.

"O, but you must, your reverence; you really must. I can't permit myself to be carried into captivity by a horde of marauding ruffians, just to humour your absurd crotchets about the sanctity of human life."

"Very well, if you think I *ought*, I'll do it; but I don't believe I shall be wanted. See, they're coming back again, and without the Arab."

"Then, they've shot him, and quite right too," said the murderous medico.

The Friar answered never a word; but he shuddered at perceiving his companion to be a man of blood and iron.

He and the Doctor now evacuated the melon-patch, and retired with some haste upon the baggage, proposing to put the encampment in a state of defence.

In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to find Ali, as the stupid camel-drivers were perfectly callous to the signs and beseechings of the Doctor, who, of course, they could not comprehend.

After wakening the echoes with the syllables "Ali, Ali, A-li!" in every intonation of grief and anger, they were reluctantly compelled to give him (and almost themselves also) up for lost.

"Without those camel-drivers, we shall not be able to make any use of our first line of defence," said the Doctor, ruefully. (Friar John did not understand.) "Why," continued the little man, "the nomads of the desert invariably use their camels as a breastwork to fire over, when surprised by a hostile party; the hump is so convenient to take cover behind," added he, evidently mindful of one of Mr. Carl Haag's water-

colours. “But as I am quite incapable of controlling the animals myself, and I know your reverence is in a similar plight, we shall be at the mercy of the marauders until Ali returns.”

“Where can he be?” wondered the Friar.

However, the advent of the others cut short what was at the best a fruitless speculation.

“Well, my dear Herakles,” said the little Doctor, nothing doubting that the man of thews had indeed slain his man, “how did you despatch him? Did you shoot the ruffian, or batter his brains out with the butt-end of your gun?”

“What ruffian? O, yes, we shot him; we shot him like a dog?” said the midshipman, with a burst of inane laughter.

Herakles explained, as soon as this had subsided, that, on nearing the Arab tent, a fearsome animal of the boarhound species burst upon them from the thicket, and made at the midshipman with distended jaws. Its sudden appearance, coupled with its appalling growls and barks, was enough, Herakles assured the Doctor apologetically, to have made the stoutest heart quail. “We had to shoot him in self-defence.”

But, as ill-luck would have it, the owner of the hound, hearing the shots, made his appearance just in time to witness the *coup de grâce*; and, in spite of a lavish bestowal of the benediction, refused to be comforted. He cursed the Giaours by his gods, quite beating Herakles and his anathema out of the field. He fairly danced with rage, flourishing the while an alarming agricultural implement of the hoe species, as though he would have liked to offer up the midshipman as a sacrifice to the manes of his departed dog.

"So we concluded to travel, and here we are," finished the narrator.

"But," asked the Doctor, "you don't think he will bring his tribe upon us in the still watches of the night, and wreak a fearful vengeance upon our devoted heads?"

Herakles couldn't say, and an uncomfortable feeling of insecurity was in consequence introduced.

"I perceive," said the midshipman, joining the group after a minute's absence, "that the dragoman is one of those persons mentioned in Scripture, who rise up early in the morning to follow strong drink."

"You don't mean to say the man's in liquor?" said his hearers, aghast.

"On the contrary, my friends, the liquor is in the man; and what's worse, it is our own Kinahan's LL, and he's finished the bottle. Behold the *corpus delicti!*" holding it upside down.)

"All I can say," quoth Herakles, "is, that the man who would engage a dipsomaniac as a guide in these outlandish parts must be a born fool!" and he looked long and fixedly at the Doctor.

"O, this is so very, *very* like the Doctor!" sighed his reverence. "We shall find next that the camel-drivers are brigands in disguise."

"That they are *not!*" said the medico, with emphasis. "And as to the dragoman being drunk, I don't believe it. He was recommended to me by the Kadi. He is *most* trustworthy."

"Come and view the body," interrupted the midshipman, as though we were a coroner's jury.

We passed behind the cactus-hedge. Alas, it was but too true! There lay the hoary-headed sinner like an Oriental Silenus. He was—— But the subject

presents few attractions. It is enough to record that if he had been a London costermonger, he would have been locked up as drunk and incapable.

I would here ask the reader to dwell for an instant upon our pitiable situation. We were alone in the wilderness, and the shades of night were falling. We had, like the French soldiery in 1870, lost all confidence in the man of destiny who should have led us to victory. We were thirty miles from the nearest European settlement. We believed ourselves (not unreasonably) to be in a hostile territory,

“Where crouching lions wait their hapless prey,
And savage men, more murderous than they.”

As we stood around that hiccoughing tippler, and the dire extremity to which we were reduced presented itself in all its horror to our trembling imaginations, is it to be wondered at that, like the peripatetic descendants of Israel, we should have murmured against our chief ? ”

“ My good friends,” said the accused with a sickly smile, “ how was I to know that this man had a weakness for Scotch whisky ? ”

“ Not much doubt about it ! Why, it’s as plain as the nose on his face that he’s fond of drink ! ” replied Herakles, with a pointed allusion to the rubicund proboscis.

As if to mock our miseries, the rain now began to descend in torrents. The night was upon us. The rain would evidently soon prove too much for the embers of the camp fire, and no tea was made. The iron entered into our very souls ; and no wonder.

The Friar’s motion, “ That this expedition do at once return,” was put for a second time ; and, with the amendment, “ As soon as the dragoman be sober

enough to guide its erring way," was carried *nem. con.*

Our meal that night consisted of biscuit, pickles, *pâté-de-foie-gras*, all smacking strongly of vinous decoctions. We kindled a sickly flame by piling furze upon the remnants of the original fire ; but the smoke this fuel emitted was out of all proportion to the comfort we derived from it. Then we rolled ourselves up in such of the vestments as were not already soaked through, and laid us down to sleep. It was a night of horror.

Every half-hour the Doctor would say "Hush ! " in a way to make our blood curdle, while he whispered that he was perfectly certain he could distinguish the shouts of the approaching Bedouins. The Friar, unhappy man, shared this writer's humble rug ; for the pocket surplice, it need scarcely be said, was not a pocket syphonia. Even the Doctor's umbrella did not keep him dry.

It was still long before daylight the next morning, when four dishevelled figures might have been perceived cramming guns, rugs, eatables, pots, pans, and cartridges, pell-mell into their camel-packs. Yes, at 3 A.M., that fateful hour, the dragoman was once more sober, and the expedition was consequently once more free to roam.

But this time, with drooping crests and stiff and aching limbs, the weary pageant wended towards the coast.

And so, at ten o'clock that night, a mean fishing-boat put alongside the ironclad, carrying all that remained of the nobly equipped expedition, which had left it the preceding morning. And that was my first and last ride on a camel in the desert of Africa.

THE GHOST IN THE DÂK BUNGALOW.

THE MYSELF did not see it; I only heard the very unnecessary and unghostly hubbub it made when it introduced itself into my apartment. But as my khitmitghar, otherwise butler, Ramiah, certainly heard, and swore too that he saw, the apparition; and as he was a native servitor of high caste, a Hindoo by religious persuasion, a firm believer in the Vedas and Shastras, and, moreover, not overfilled at the time with opium, bhang, or alcohol, why, I felt bound to accept his statement—with a grain of salt.

Now, how we both came to listen to, and one of us to cast eyes upon the ghost in the dâk bungalow, was in this wise :

I was upon one of my periodical visits of inspection from Jaggareebad, the head-quarters of the military division to which I belonged, towards Jambee, an outpost scores and scores and scores of miles away. In those days, Jaggareebad was not connected with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway by a State line of rail, as now it is, but about one hundred and fifty miles of what it was the facetious fashion to call a *road* had to be travelled over before the G.I.P.R. aforesaid was struck at the civil station of Dooliebearerboore.

And what a road ! Multiply the erst famous “corduroy” ones of the United States of America by a

recently-cut coffee estate track at the Wynnaid of India, by a forest-path in Mexico, and by a camel route across the desert of Sahara, and the product will give some idea of the roughness and badness of the highway I speak of.

The first few miles out of Jaggareebad were passably good ; but those accomplished, one had to be jolted over huge granite boulders, jutting up in the middle of the carriage track; to be dragged axle-deep either through sand or black cotton soil; to be dashed down the steep banks of nullahs on one side, and toiled up their equally steep acclivities on the other; to be pulled over gullies, mostly dry, but sometimes wet with tenacious mud; to be waded across a large and pretentious river if in the hot season, or ferried over it in a hide and wicker circular boat if in the rainy ; and lastly, to be stopped altogether—for a time at least—by trees blown down, by bridges washed away, and by sundry other impediments too numerous to mention.

And then the stereotyped vehicles in which these miseries had to be endured ! They were called *transits* or *nibbs*, and were drawn by bullocks, at a pace which by dint of large *backsheesh* to the garmentless boy-drivers, might be made to come up to one league per hour, but, as a rule, averaged two miles and a half in the same time.

Now, a well-built, well-padded, well cushioned bullock-coach is by no means an uncomfortable conveyance, even if it gets slowly over the ground ; but the nibbs which were run upon those hundred and fifty miles of the Deccan were simply beastly. The word is certainly vulgar, but it is expressive.

Fancy a wooden box, about seven feet long by three wide, covered with an arched canvas top, partly open

at the sides, having a door behind, and mounted upon springs of iron, to strengthen which for the ups and downs of the journey slices of bamboo were bound on with coir rope. To enter the carriage it was necessary to make what sailors call a “stern-board,” and when in, it was alike necessary to lie down ; for sitting upright, except for a pigmy or a child, was almost impossible. Attempt that posture and your head got caved in. A native of wealth and position owned and hired out these quaint traps, and had a predilection for painting them all red, all save one, of nearly double the ordinary dimensions and weight, and which, in honour of its now-and-again occupation, he bedaubed a dirty white. The occasional employment, which gave increase of size and difference of colour to this nibb, was its being used as a travelling carriage when bride and bridegroom went on their honeymoon trip for any distance out of cantonment ! and the wits of Jaggareebad, knowing this, called it “Orange blossoms” in contradistinction to the others, which they named “Red Rovers.”

At every ten or twelve miles of the road I have tried to picture the traveller found a Government rest-house or dâk bungalow placed for his accommodation ; small stone or brick buildings with one general room furnished with a cane-bottom sleeping-cot or two, a couple of long armchairs, a table and some crockery. A halt at intervals in one of these domiciles was imperative, but the less one had to do with them the better ; for certain foul things loved the *cari luoghi* of the convenient crevices of the rattan couches and chairs aforesaid, populated them thickly and—were always hungry.

Well, as I began by telling, I was upon a certain

occasion on an official trip down this Gehenna of a thoroughfare, and in one of the accursed "Red Rovers." The questionably faithful Ramiah was with me, seated upon a narrow perch or bar beside the byle (bullock) Jehu. During many hours he slept a sleep wondrous even for a nigger—who can sleep always, anywhere, in any position, and upon anything. I meantime was suffering tortures from jolts, from sudden springs upwards and as sudden dives downwards. Every bone in my body ached and was sore, and in mine agony I am afraid that I anathematised freely, and in every tongue of which I had the slightest knowledge—anathematised nibb and cattle and driver. The language of Hindostan is rich in powerful expletives, as some of my readers may know; but, as I was only acquainted with one word of these, and that the very, very mildest the infuriated European casts into the teeth of the mild Hindoo—*soor*, "you pig," to wit—and moreover, as the *sansculotte* of a whip was in blessed ignorance of any other tongue than his own, I do not think that the highly-improper d—s, and the *sacrés*, and the *malditas*, and the *donners* and *blitzens* I hurled incessantly at him *ore rotundo*, fell with anything like the eighty-ton-gun power I intended them. Indeed, all their (to me) perceptible effect was to make him "cluck, cluck" a little louder to his cattle, to cause him to wave more gracefully his whip over them; to give a more sounding, but not more painful, whack upon their thick, drum-stretched hides; to twist their apparently jointless and insensitive tails; and to bawl out, "*Jaldi jao, jaldi jao*" ("go quickly"), "ye sons of shameless mothers!" To himself, though, I have not the least doubt he was saying, "What a most unbecoming rage is that old

Feringhee inside there putting himself into! I can't help Deccan road being bad; I can't make the half-starved byles run faster; I am neither the maker nor the owner of the heavy nibb. Therefore, what can do, what can do?"

It was upon the second night of my journey; time, past twelve; weather, dark, drizzly, and cold. I had just fallen into a sort of fitful and most uncomfortable doze, when a jerk more pronounced than any I had yet experienced sent me flying up to the roof of the carriage. The habitual *soor* was not fairly out of my lips, when crack! crash! the nibb swayed, tumbled over, and I was thrown, with my ribs half-broken, against its side.

With some difficulty I wriggled out at the back-door, and found myself standing upon the road in a foot or so of black cotton-mud.

Ramiah was lying prostrate in the same slush. He, in his slumbers, had been jerked clean off the perch.

"What the deuce is this?" I asked.

"Ah, bah! Saab can know," replied Ramiah, "plenty too much boddar dis. Wheel of nibb come off—axle break; ah, bah!"

"Confound it all! Why did not that *soor* of a byle-wallah *kupperdar*." By kupperdar I meant take care. I believe I was right, but I daresay I was wrong in the Hindostanee term.

"Rocky stone, he plenty too much big; sticking up; master can look."

I did, and there was a boulder, a couple of feet high, in the very centre of the road. It would have cost half a rupee's worth of blasting-powder to have removed it, so the economical Public Works Department let it remain and obstruct.

The driver and my man whooped and shouted after a peculiar native fashion, and, in a very few minutes, half a dozen or so of ragamuffins came from some holes and corners with lighted torches.

"Whereabouts is the next bungalow, Ramiah? and how far?" I said.

"Junglepore, saab; two *cos*" (*i.e.* six miles) "away."

"Well, I suppose that there is no help for it; we must tramp it there."

"'Scuse me, saab, *no!* Much betterer go back to bungalow little while ago pass; betterer house, betterer village, betterer eberyting; and one clever carpenter make live dere for mend nibb."

"How far back is it, Ramiah?" I inquired.

"Also same two *cos*."

"Then why not go on to Junglepore; why back to Dashpett?"

"My master can't possible go to Junglepore rest-house."

"Why not? Cholera got?" (N.B. The existence of this disease is the very first question a European puts when any native locality is interdicted him.)

"No, saab, no cholera! worse ting. Shitan, de debil, he now got custom to live in that dâk bungalow."

"Indeed! And why there, Ramiah, more than in any other of all the suitable homes for him along this general Tophet of a road?"

"Master not know—master not hear tell. I can gib master whole story; master listen. Three four year ago too much blackguard dacoit make steal along dis way. One time they rob sowear (native banker), Sellemwellall's schroff (cashier), coming to Jaggareebad, of tousands rupee. Bazaar-folk plenty laugh; say,

‘Ah, ah, *bote utcha!*—very good. Sellemwellall sowcar, he rob everybody wid his too big interest charge; now dacoit rob sowcar, and take interest and principal both together.’ Nodder time dacoit make bone Sahib Hunter’s silver cups his horses win at Presidency and Mofussil races. Officers of regiment speak soft in mess compound, and say, ‘Old bloke dat, our Colonel Hunter; why he not keep it dark that cups were in the nibb? why he bodder always his chokerah (a junior servant) wid orders? Ram, mind the box; Chunder, look after the deal case; Ram Chunder, you villen, if you don’t take care of cups I’ll let you know what horsewhip means.’ So, of course, dacoit get the gup, lay wait for nibb, stop it, lick old Hunter Saab, tief plate, and next day melt it down at silversmith’s. But nodder ‘easion dacoit try dis sort ob game at the very dâk bungalow of Junglepore, where master want go dis night, wid one Mister Mee Gilp, a gentlemans make pictures on cloth for sell. Master can b’lieve that chap; he got nothing at all wid him, only a few rupees in a bag, a suit or two of karkee clothes, a solar topee, and an old good-for-nothing tin box wid small sort of pewter-bottles inside. Dacoit *logue* (people) get *kubbur* (news) bout dis box. *Kubbur* say, too much money worth dat old tin case; only you got take finger make squeeze dis silver bottle, dat one, dat one, when out come yellow stuff to make gold, red stuff to make ruby jewel, white stuff to make pearl big as you choose. But master can know all lie dis; bottle hold nothing more than chûnam, ochre, and kunkah, same like native mans in bazaar make wash walls and floors of his house, only betterer. But I forgot one ting more that painter Saab got, and know how use—Europe muster-pistol, call six-shooter. So, when dam

ties of Pathan and Arab dacoit come to Junglepore dâk bungalow, where Saab Mee Gilp stay, for make copy of village and temple and nautch girls, they get in through window, and see and hear the gentlemans they going to loot, sleep, sleep, snore, snore, like pig, on charpoy. Dacoit make no the least row; dacoit take light put afore Mee Gilp eye; not open one bit; he sleep and snore still. Den they move quiet like snake to bullock trunk, break lock,lift lid, see old tin box, take it, and creep to window to *jao*—when—bang! bang! off go two barrel of revolver. Kill one man on de pot (spot), wound odder, and send two more run away like antelope hunted by cheetah. Then Saab Mee Gilp he say, ‘You won’t trouble me again, old chaps, if you know it.’ Make sleep till daylight, get *chota hazzree*, and go on to Jaggareebad.

“Some little bobheree nawab make ’bout dis business; but one man he say, ‘Dacoit, and desarve it;’ odder man say, ‘Chut! Allah is great and good—*only* a nigger, and not worth fussing about;’ and so the bobheree soon end. But many many time when Europe people stop night at Junglepore, the ghoulé—what they call in Feringhee tongue the ghost—of that same dacoit, he come inside bungalow, kick up row, and frighten them to death. No, saab, ’scuse me, not can go there.”

“I am going, nevertheless, Ramiah,” I observed. “I do not intending taking one step backward on this breakneck of a road. Hire two or three coolies to carry the traps, and *en avant marchons*, if you know what that means.”

“Sahib quite plenty - too - much sure he mean go?”

“Yes.”

"Then I make *poojah* (prayer) for master come safe away."

"Make what you like, Ramiah, only be sharp and let's get on."

Six miles only as it was, daylight had quite come before we arrived at the bungalow, which, of its kind, was really pretty, standing back from the roadside, picturesquely embowered in a little grove of margosa, suria, mango, custard apple, and other trees, and with oleanders, crotons, and such like common tropical shrubs growing in its clean well-kept compound. I really felt thankful at getting a rest after the shaking of the nibb, in the charmingly inviting place, haunted as it was said to be, by my henchman's account.

The village head-man interviewed, a messenger on a rough pony started into Jaggareebad for another "Red Rover" to be sent to me as soon as possible; there was nothing more to be done for twenty-four hours at least, so I set about killing time as pleasantly as I could. And really, now that I recall it, sitting at this desk of mine, the day passed far from uninterestingly.

First I took a stroll into the neighbouring bazaar, to pick up from the sellers of fowls and eggs, honey and coarse fruit, their best for the consumption of Ramiah and self; to look as well upon

"The early village maiden,
With her shining pitcher laden
Moving—gait erect and steady—
To the well across the plain,"

and after that marketing and inspection, to potter for a while among paddy-fields and *raggee* (millet) lands, in hopes of a stray snipe, a partridge or two, or perhaps even a spotted deer; the said potter, I may as well state, unsuccessful. Then breakfast, a cheroot, and a lounge in the verandah, taking note of the travellers

up and down the road in front. Many and various were they :

“ Some swarthy magnates urbans,
With wrappers round their turbans
And their chins,”

looking as if they had chronic toothache, riding past with a motley retinue of horsemen and footmen armed to the teeth with matchlocks, and tulwars, and lances. Presently an elephant, with a gaudily-painted howdah ; after it a varnished yellow-curtained palanquin, supposed to conceal the lovely light of a nawab’s hareem, but more likely the brown leather-like face and shrivelled figure of an old Mahometan squaw. Next, troops of the carriers of that part of Southern India, the Bringarees as they are called, the women in quaint picturesquely-coloured needlework costumes leading the cattle, loaded with bags of corn and fodder.

“ Then a group of woodsmen passes,
With their faggots on their asses ;
And a drove of oxen plodding,
Each with grain-filled sack.
And a postal runner, ringing
All his little bells, and swinging
With his measured trot, and letters
In the leather at his back ; ”*

and a host more of those wayfarers who, to a stranger in a strange land, and that land the Deccan, are such objects of surprise and concern, but soon fade into nothingness.

So the day went, and the night came.

Previously to retiring to the (un)rest the cane-bottom couch was likely to afford, I had a short palaver with the bungalow-keeper, a half-caste of alcoholic proclivities, and who corroborated Ramiah’s tale anent the dacoit and his sprite, adding that, in consequence

* *Lays of Ind.* “ Our ride,” slightly altered.

of the bad name the bungalow had acquired, there was difficulty—pay notwithstanding—to get a person to take a charge of it.

“Did the dead and buried, or burnt, Pathan of a dacoit come back often to take a look at the scene of his demise ?”

“Only now and again.”

“Have you ever seen or heard him ?”

“No. I am only here a few days ; if I did see or hear, I should go.”

“Being a Christian, Gomes,” (that was his name), “do you believe the story, or do you think that it is a trick to steal the alarmed travellers’ rupees ?”

“The saints shield me ! I pin my faith upon its truth.”

“Well, you and I are at variance. Good-night.”

Then I lay down upon the much-infested charpoy, and Ramiah spread his mat in the adjoining bathroom.

I must have slept for some hours, spite of heat, mosquitoes, and other blood-suckers, when suddenly I jumped up, disturbed by the din and clatter of somebody, or something, tumbling over tables and chairs, in a rapid flight across the brick floor. This was followed by a noise like the banging of a door, and the opening and shutting of the flap-shutters of a wooden window. Then there was a sort of unearthly howl or laugh, of a convulsive, spasmodic nature ; a jump, a fall, and the light tread of rapidly retreating footsteps across the compound.

“Hullo ! who’s there ?—what’s that ? Speak ! or I’ll fire at you.”

I seized the oil-lamp, dimly burning in the furthest corner of the room. Its light showed me a chair

upset, a window ajar, and the awfully scared Ramiah cowering in the doorway. That khitmitghar's face was usually black, but, so far as I could now see it, it was the colour of the ashes drawn in lines across his forehead on religious high days and holidays of his faith. His white teeth, immovable except when pitching into curry and rice, were now rattling like dice in a dice-box ; his eyeballs stared ; he was trembling from head to foot. He was within an ace of a fit ; one infinitesimal degree more of fright, and the seizure would have been accomplished.

"Wah, wah ! uppah, uppah ! My Lord, I tell you so ; my fader, why you bring poor Ramiah here ? I dead, I dead ! Siva got me ; nebber again my wife, my sister, my poor old mudder see ! wah, wah !"

"Why not," I said, "if, in the terrible uncomeliness of all three, they are worth looking upon once more ? Pull yourself together, man ; and the thing, whatever it was, being gone, Ramiah's himself again."

"Can't be, saab ; can't be. Master not see ?"

"No, I only heard ; and I think it must have been a—"

"No, my lord, no any odder living thing than dead dacoit ; one big, stout, copper-skin man. I sleep—hot breath like forge come 'pon my face—wake me. I look—I see two big eyes like debil staring at me—I see mouth red, like fire, close my neck, grinning at me. I see arm, long like paddy-pounder, wave over me. I scream—Shitan—he himself—I know him—run, my room into master's, and knock down eberyting for rage."

"Well, Ramiah, as a general rule, ghosts in other countries go noiselessly over or through obstructions. What they may do here, or in the particular case of

the spirit of a dacoit, I don't know, for I have never seen the individual dead or alive. So I repeat that the thing which made that awful shindy just now must have been a four-footed——”

“No, saab ; 'scuse me, not four, only two ; plain, like my own, I see them, and—uppah ! uppah ! I see him now—look ! look !”

We were standing near the open window gazing into the gloom of the surrounding tope of trees.

“Look, saab, look !”

I could see nothing, but still my frightened servant kept on crying out, “Look, look !”

“Where, you wretched old nigger coward ? where ?”

“There ! there ! ghoul slinking away, 'mong the trees—*deckho* ! see, aie-aie ! yes, yes !”

“Well, if he be slinking off I will haphazard give him something to freshen his way back to Tartarus.”

I took up my rifle, which was loaded, and fired. The ball went whizzing among the branches and pinging in the distance. There was a sound as of something fleeing rapidly.

“Gone,” said Ramiah ; and he seemed to be much relieved, and to breathe more freely in consequence.

“An animal, by all that is natural,” I observed ; “a prowling jackal, perhaps ; a honey-seeking bear, maybe ; a cheetah. No ; by Jove, no !” as I sniffed the tainted atmosphere of the room. “No ; I have it. The Moor—I know his trumpet. An empyreumatic nidorous beast of a laughing hyæna, by all that is disgusting ! For goodness' sake, let me get out of this into the fresh air !”

Ramiah shook his head.

“Saab will 'scuse me—this not scent of hyæna ; Shitan's very own selfsame scent. Native mans know

it well—betterer than sandal wood or rose otto rajahs and nawabs use and gib presents ob at *tamashas* (fêtes) in city. Master's a good gentleman, master's a cleber man, master neber tell lie ; but all same, now I not b'lieve him. Dat ting come dis night dâk bungalow, kick up bobheree, laughing hyæna ? Nebber ! No, sar ; he ghost of dacoit saab painter Mee Gilp shoot in dis very, very house. I see him, and I swear, sar."

" Well, Ramiah, 'opinions are opinions,' as M—of my old regiment used to say. You stick to the 'ghost in the dâk bungalow ;' I will to the laughing hyæna —there ! Yours is the better story ; but— Hurrah ! Here comes the 'Red Rover' nibb. Let us be off for Doolibearerbore and the G.I.P. Railway."

HOW BROOKE BECAME A FELLOW-CRAFTSMAN.



BROOKE was an insufferable nuisance, quite too too utterly utter, as an æsthetic would say.

Socially, he was a Government clerk in the little dockyard of our military and naval station ; physically, he was a miserably wretched specimen of the tropically enervated and washed-out Londoner ; intellectually, he was hardly one infinitesimal degree superior to the large white-bearded Wanderoo monkeys that chattered in the jungles around.

But, unfortunately for us, in Brooke's otherwise empty brain he had an out-of-the-way corner less void than the rest of that feeble structure ; in it he kept his whole and sole and only thought, and to which he was incessantly giving tongue. That thought was Freemasonry.

All sorts and conditions of men whom he could buttonhole did he pester with his monomaniacal inquiries as to their appertaining to, or knowledge of, the time-honoured and respected craft ; all sorts and conditions of women would he have smilingly treated, but in the first place they were buttonholeless, and in the next he had learnt that, traditionally, but one of their sex had ever been numbered among the mysterious brotherhood ; and she, good lady, had been dead and turned to clay ages ago.

If, as it sometimes occurred, we were of the few initiated into Masonry, we laughed his questions to scorn, or met them with chilling silence; but if we happened to rank with the many who knew nothing at all about the subject, then we concocted awful "crammers," and stuffed them into him for digestion. And he did digest every one of them, without the least after-symptom of dyspepsia.

Many a time and oft had we besought him to go to Port Columbus, the chief town of our colony, where there were Masonic lodges galore, get "sealed," ascertain in person that which we would not, or could not tell him, and so have his blessed tongue tied against further gabbling; but no, not one inch Columbus-way would he stir. Now it was that scanty funds prevented him, then that his disagreeable chief would not give him leave of absence; or again, "Mother says I mustn't;" and so he continued to be, to do, and we to suffer. At last a lucky card turned up—it always will if you wait long enough—and Brooke and his Freemasonry were put an end to.

There came and joined the garrison Phelim O'Brien, of the Engineers, a fellow of infinite jest; so infinite, that he had more than once got into trouble by reason of it. A few days after his arrival Brooke besieged him.

"Captain O'Brien," said he, "are you a Freemason?"

"Be the powers, ye are not, or ye wouldn't be asking me the question; ye'd luke in me face, and there ye'd say (see) it all."

"I have an awful wish to belong to the craft."

"Then whoy the dickens don't ye? Faith, surr, it's a community full of brotherly and overflowing with sisterly luv, and would suit you down to the ground."

"So I think; but I can't conveniently manage to go to Port Columbus, and there is no lodge here."

"No lodge! you surproise me; but it will not be long before there is one. Howivir, the mess is no place to discoorse on these matthers; be at me bungalow the morrow, and oi'll be spaking it over wid ye."

After dinner, O'Brien came to Vernon, Jacques la Fontaine, a young French officer from Pondicherry staying with us, Cole, the doctor, and myself, and said if we felt inclined to join him, and keep his dodge dark, he had an idea that he could put an effectual stopper upon Brooke, and shut up his unintermitting jabber for ever."

"We are with you heartily," said we Englishmen.

"Coûte qui coûte, moi aussi," replied La Fontaine. "By all zee swamies (gods) of ze niggaires a-round, zat doge vill be to me most agréable. Peste! zat, Brookes 'as not cea-sed from zee bore of me vid 'is Franc-maçonnerie all zee nights I am of ze messe. Bah! he make to descend my troat vidout taste zee admirâble prawn corrie of zour black chef de cuisine, and zee creamy bittare Bass bierre of zour cellare. Put zee stoppaire upon zee mout of zat mans, and I vill recommend zou to l'Empereur for zee Légion d'Honneur, mon ami."

"Well, o'il troy and settle his hash, and soon."

Next day, according to appointment, Brooke and O'Brien were closeted. The latter opens the conversation.

"Now that we are togither wid closed dures, Brooke, oi will confoide a saycret to ye. Oi am a Mason!"

Brooke starts with astonishment.

"And a hoigh and moighty one as well, a Royal Loyal Knoight Grand Star of the Orther of the Silver

Hod. La Fontaine, Vernon, Cole, and Chamberlain are Masons also, but, bless your souhl, small peetaties in comparison to me. Now, if you are in arnest to be of us, why, oi can send a chit to the Colonial Grand Masther, and ask him to give me lave to assemble a drumhead coort-martial—chut! what am oi afther saying?—a lodge of most eemergint necessity, oi mane, and the foive of us can thry—that is, make you a Fraymason here. Oi shall beg him, when he sinds the orther, to let me call the lodge—ye don't understand Latin—the Pons Asinorum; and by it ye may pass over, if ye can, into another lodge, and take another degray. But oi am bound to tell ye that oi shan't be able to do the job widout expinse to ye; it shall be done as chape as .oi can, but rhupees it must cost you."

"How many?" asks Brooke anxiously.

"Maybe sixty. The great outlay will be the usual post-in-vesture supper—supper for six, for ye'll be afther taking a bite wid us, won't ye? A toorkey, a tongue, a small saddle of gramfed mutton—faith, small it must be, for ye can't git that sort of mate big at all at all out of the baby-soized goat-looking shape of this countrry; then three or fower—betther say fower at once—bottles of fizz, brandy, ice, and other dhrinkables and ateables at discraytion. Recollect this motto o' mine, 'Sinay Sayrare et Baccho et tobacco, friget. Francum Masonericum as well as Vaynus.'"

"And how much will the Grand Master's permission come to?" inquires Brooke.

"Two annas—threepence stherling. Bar the post-age, it may be got for the asking. Do ye agray to the tarms?"

"Well," said Brooke, "I happen to have a little coin

in the O.B.C. bank saved up for a sapphire ring I was going to get made for the girl I am engaged to, but——”

“Ye engaged to be morried? Ye! The blissed saints have mercy upon the unfortunate young woman! But as ye were about to say, what are prisints of sappheer rings to an ill-starred ghurl in compareesin to your being a fray and accepted Mason? I can tell ye, in one of our most expressive Masonic words, *skittles!*”

“You are right, O’Brien; the tin shall be forthcoming, and Mary Jane must wait.”

“Sartainly she must.”

So it was settled that Brooke was to be installed as soon as possible, and the supper provided.

There was a little islet across our harbour—and a noble and picturesque one it was—called Toper’s Island, and on it stood a bungalow used for picnics, honeymoons, and suchlike outings. It was the most suitable of all our localities for the purpose we wanted, and O’Brien, without disclosing reasons, got it “loaned” him. Then, on the sly, we set about its “fixings,” and what these consisted in the reader will learn when he enters with us and Brooke into the penetralia on the night of the inauguration.

That ceremonial duly came. O’Brien, La Fontaine, and the rest of our party were paddled over in a large outriggered canoe, and, vowing vengeance and no backsheesh to the Tamil boatmen if they dared to bring anyone else from the fort or the lines, felt ourselves pretty safe on the ait. Soon after we landed, friend B. made his *entrée* from the naval yard, his coolies bearing hampers filled with the “matheriels” for the indoctrination feed. Leaving him to set these in an outer room, we went into an inner one, the lodge itself, to give it

the finishing touches, and this was how it looked when so done.

Its walls were hung with the common blue-black coarse native cloth of the place, without one single thread of colour to brighten up the dull heavy gloom. In one corner was a coffin, easily enough procured, for the bazaar carpenters kept them ready-made for immediate occupation. A large shower-bath occupied another nook, and a bucket filled with blocks of Wenham Lake ice a third. In that gelid mass was hidden a well-known instrument of iron used for branding military stores, and shaped like an arrow, and lettered W.D. Across the top of the room was placed a barrack-table, draped with black cloth, and on it stood the following articles, all supposed by one or other of us to be symbolical of Freemasonry as we knew it, or rather as we did not: One skull and crossed thigh-

ones, erst part of the bony system of a Malabar coolie; one skeleton of a python snake, another of a large Wanderoo ape—Brooke's counterfeit presentment, as before mentioned—and a repulsive anatomical preparation “in spirits in a phial.” These Cole, the doctor, had contributed. Then there were also laid out a bricklayer's trowel, a measuring tape, a line and plummet, two or three pairs of compasses, a theodolite—the instrument land surveyors call a dumpy level—an old sextant, and last, though not least, a huge dab of white chunam (slaked lime) on a mortar-board. Besides these, however, the table displayed the following writings upon the history and institutes of Freemasonry:

1. Noah Webster's imperial folio edition of the *English Language*.
2. Doctor John Davy's account of the *Island of Ceylon*, also a very imposing-looking tome.
3. *L'Homme qui Rit*. (This was La Fontaine's little

offering, and meant by him to typify in its title his own eachinnatory inclination). 4. *Enquire Within upon Everything*. "Maybe," said O'Brien, as he put the book down, "oi may larn something anent Masonry by inquoiring *widin*.—*widout* oi am as ignorant as a Cinghalese *dhobie*" (washerman).

Lastly, there was ready at hand a copy of the Mutiny Act, with its pages carefully turned down at the form for the attestation of a recruit.

When two tallow-candles—no more—were lighted, and darkness made visible, O'Brien declared the lodge O.K., the "properties" *en règle*, and that we might begin.

Seating ourselves at the table, tricked out in "shreds and patches" representing aprons, scarves, and other Masonic insignia, and looking, as we were, a quorum of idiotic Guy Fawkeses, O'Brien, as Worshipful Master, called out lustily,

"Brother Cole, admit the probationer for the Staff Corps—for Masonic insights, oi should say."

Brooke was led in by Cole, Vernon and Chamberlain striking up "The Rogue's March," a quondam well-known military air, on the fife and drum as he entered. What little he could see of the room and its paraphernalia scared him; he had evidently not expected such a *mise-en-scène*.

"I don't half like it, gentlemen," said he. "I think, after all, that I won't be made a Mason."

"The devil you won't;" exclaimed O'Brien. "Begorrah, you must! Having once crossed the Roobecan of me lodge Pons Asinorum, faith, ye'll have to go to the Room of it; noolla nesteegia raytrorsum here, Misther Brooke. Bar the dure, La Fontaine."

The active little Frenchman leaped like one of his

national frogs to the portal, and had it locked and bolted in the twinkling of an eye.

"Recaive our noviciate wid the salute laid down at para. 4 of the Lodge regulations."

A Colt's revolver which Vernon had in his pocket was drawn out, and the six barrels fired rapidly close to Brooke's ear. At each discharge he started violently.

"Now," said O'Brien, "let the prisoner—chut!—the nayoophite pay attintion to some of the dochtraynes and praycepts of the craft."

And then opening Webster's Lexicon, he pretended to read, and really did deliver, such a nice little homily that it would not have disgraced any *bonâ-fide* Masonic parson if preached before his brother Masons in church assembled. It was the only bit of sense in all the tomfoolery; there was not one syllable of ridicule or word of disrespect against the veritable craftdom; quite, quite the contrary.

"Hear, hear!" said we.

"Encore! bis, bis!" said La Fontaine.

"Howld ye'er noise, ye spalpeens! ye make me forget me part. Zany Brooke—zany manes me honoured brother—are ye ready and willing to intir into the fraternitiy of Masons as ye'll be taught it here? Ye are? Good! Then oi, *M.*, the masther, take thee, *N.*, the nincompoop, to be my wed—bliss me, what on airth am oi dhraming about!—to be an accepted Mason. Brother Vernon, affirm the 'omadhoun,' and tip him the soign."

So we affirmed Brooke on the Mutiny Act with the attestation for a recruit, "I do solemnly declare I will true allegiance bear to Queen Victoria," &c., and gave him the same sign which, in the *Ingoldsby Legends*, we read that the sceptical Sacristan adopted on the

occasion when the Abbot's niece came to reside in the monastery with her supposititious uncle :

“ He put out his tongue, and bulged his cheeks,
And twice he winked his eye.”

“ Let his out-of-dures-gathered-ante-Masonic red dust and unclaneness be laved off.”

“ We made Brooke divest himself of most of his garments, thrust him under the shower-bath, and let down upon him some gallons of good, fresh, cool sea-water. He spluttered and cried “ O, O ! ” and rushed out shivering.

“ Now let him larn that man is but dust, and that to dust he, loike other men, will retoorn, maybe in this bastely feevur-sthruck hole, in a deed thing loike that, ‘scamped’ and run togither wid rotten planks and rusty nails.”

O'Brien pointed to the coffin. We all five deftly seized our dupe, tripped him up, and “ ran him in ” in a second, La Fontaine clapping on the lid, and sitting on it, until the occupant screamed, “ Let me out ! let me out ! By Jove, you're all smothering me ! ugh ! ”

“ Zany Brooke,” said O'Brien, “ ye have borne two ordyals loike a *brick*, the most appropriate name for a Mason oi can bestow upon ye ; but as a brick is altogether unserviceable before it is burnt, so is a Fray-mason none widout undergoing the same treatment. Foire and brand the beggar ! ”

With some difficulty we got hold of Brooke, laid him down, and bared his back. Then, taking the branding-iron, which had been long standing in the ice, clapped it between his shoulders and pressed it there. The sensation, of course, was as if a hot metal had been applied to the skin, and so indeed Brooke thought it, for he called out lustily, “ D—— it, you fellows, you're

burning me to death! Murder, murder! dash it all!"

"Do not swear in 'coort,' Brooke; it is improper, ungentlemanloike, and worst of all, un-Masonic. Everything is now over, bar tattooing wid the craft's letters, *B.C.*,"* which the coort—that is the lodge—remitis."

"Pas moi! Monsieur le Président," exclaims La Fontaine, "I remits nothings; if zou remits one affaire, 'ow can zee Brooke know all? Il doit connaître le dessous des cartes. I am for zee B.C.s."

"Never moindre, La Fontaine, he knows enuf; and much good may it do him! The Lodge is done; supper's the word. Oi am as hungree as a howling jackal."

We did ample justice to Brother Brooke's meats and drinks; drank "'is 'eelth in tree chairs," as our Gallic companion put it, and returned to our homes on the mainland.

Of course it was impossible that the joke could be long kept secret in our small and gossip-loving society, and equally of course some one told Brooke of the "sell." He was furious, and challenged every one of us to single combat. But when we replied that it was against the Articles of War to fight the Simiæ, then he reported us to head-quarters. O'Brien escaped a court-martial by the skin of his teeth, but was removed from our midst; so was the doctor. The rest of us were wigged, threatened, and officially advised "to be more careful in future." But Brooke himself could not remain at the station. Some asked him for "the sign and countersign;" others, "Where gashed with honour-

* For the information of non-military readers, *B.C.* stands for bad character.

able scars ?" others, again, how he felt "down among the dead men," and when he was coming out of his *shell*. Even his very dockyard coolies, lickings notwithstanding, inquired "Why Doray (master) been done gone learn Mason work, when plenty too much native man here doing same sort business for four annas (sixpence) a day batta ?" So away he went, we knew and cared not whither, so long as we heard his balderdash no more.

Yet he skedaddled not before he received the following billet :

"DEAR SIR,—I am told that you have become a Freemason. I will never marry a man who possesses a secret I can't know more of than he knows himself. I am also told—and it is really too horrible—that you squandered the money with which my blue-sapphire ring was to be purchased, in giving a grand supper to the boon companions of that society, which, as no ladies are permitted to belong to, cannot be at all respectable, in my opinion. On these two scores, take back the love you gave me, and send me mine—not forgetting the silk purse I netted for you—by return of mail.—Yours truly,

"MARY JANE SMITH."

THE SOLDIER'S STORY. GABRIELLA'S GRATITUDE.

"**N**OW, Major Tanfylde, your tale, if you please."

"*My* tale?" repeated the grizzled warrior, wrinkling up his hard mahogany features into a most unromantic grin ; " d'ye think *I've* ever been a man to dangle "up-stairs and down-stairs, and in my lady's chamber ?" Not I."

" I'm not so sure about that. But a tale we must have, and of love and of Christmas, too."

A sudden change came over the war-worn Major.

" Of love and of Christmas, too," he muttered to himself, and then went on more loudly, " I forgot : I have such a tale, and you shall hear it. D'ye see that scar ? "

He spread out on the table his brown sinewy right hand, palm downwards, and with his left forefinger he pointed to a dark purple ring in the flesh, round which the skin was slightly furrowed and uneven ; but save when direct attention was called to the mark, and under a good light, it would not have been much observed.

" I'll tell you the tale of *that*," he went on ; " and much good may it do the hot-blooded youngsters ! "

Fancy to yourselves a bleak October morning, the twilight of early day which is worse than no light at all, or, at least, is more imposing; a fast-flowing and winding river, whence arises a dense, clammy, white mist shrouding all things from view; thick scrub running down the precipitous banks to the very water's edge; a sombre background of lofty rugged mountains; and a body of armed men sleeping soundly as they lie, like the sheeted dead, rolled in their coarse gray blankets, under the shelter of the woods lining the course of the rapid stream.

A few sentries here and there in advance, of whom I was one—I, a commissioned officer in her Majesty's army, home from China on long leave, and spending it, or wasting it, as a volunteer in Garibaldi's army of 1860.

Through Sicily had we come victors in every fight; through Calabria, which offered us no resistance; to Naples, the Bourbon capital, that fell without an exchange of shots; and so on to the banks of the Volturno, in front of Capua, wherein lay beleaguered the army of Francis II., whilom King of the Two Sicilies, and now fighting desperately to regain his throne.

A shrill, yet not loud, whistle from the left fell on my ear, effectually dispelling the drowsiness induced by the nipping air of daybreak, and by the dreary watch, which had now lasted since midnight—a long “sentry-go,” but such was the custom there and then.

Instantly I became rigid as a ramrod, and brought my rifle to the “present.” Out of the denseness of the white mist loomed a figure rapidly coming in my direction.

"Stand, or I fire!" cried I, in my own tongue, for, if I must tell the truth, I was taken unawares, and forgot to challenge in Italian.

"Bosh, old fellow; it's only me—Willy Mountjoy."

"Then why the deuce have you left your post?" asked I, shivering with cold, and no little annoyed at the loss of dignity as indicated in his free-and-easy reply to my formidable summons.

"Well, I heard most distinctly a horse neighing—"

"More likely a donkey braying—to his brother."

"Funny dog! No, it was a horse neighing, and there were certainly no horses in front of our lines last evening. Besides that I thought I heard—"

"A soldier has no business to think," was my stupid interruption.

"But as I happen to be a sailor, I *do* think. I heard as plain as I hear your voice, a—a—sort of—well, a row."

"A row! What was it like?"

"Well, I can't say exactly—something like when the purser's people are rolling casks about the decks, and you are trying to get to sleep in your watch below."

"A rumbling noise?"

"Yes; a low heavy, rumbling noise—out that way."

He pointed with his finger to our left half-front, just where Capua lay, but of course we could see nothing for the thick mist.

"Come back to your post with me," I said, "and we will listen."

We did so—not a sound. I placed my ear on the ground, and in a few seconds I jumped up again on my feet.

"Good heavens!" I cried, "it is the rumble of artillery!"

Leaving Willy Mountjoy—who, I may as well say now, as later, had not long before received his lieutenant's swab in the English Royal Navy, and had come out to Italy with me “by way of a lark” while waiting appointment to a ship—leaving him, then, at his post with strict injunctions to be on the *qui vive*, I ran back through the wood to the wretched shanty where the guard were lying, and told the officer in command—a smart Genoese, who had seen a good deal of active service—my suspicions, nay, my certainty, that guns and tumbrils were moving along the road leading from Capua to St. Angelo, where our main body of Garibaldini lay. Hastily he turned out the whole of his men, advanced them in loose order, and as swiftly though silently as possible, far beyond the post of my friend and chum Willy Mountjoy, and in a quarter of an hour we had ample evidence that a large body of infantry, cavalry, and artillery were *en route* in the direction I have mentioned. The alarm was passed with the speed of lightning along the whole Garibaldini line, and in less than thirty minutes the guns of the attacking Neapolitans roared out the shotted salvoes which saluted the commencement of the desperate battle of the Volturno.

Don't think I'm going to inflict on you a sort of special correspondent's report of that plucky fight; all I have to say about it can be packed in a short sentence, viz. it lasted for eight hours, and at the end of it the King and his army were driven helter-skelter back to Capua, the artillery of which fortress alone saved them from utter rout.

Well, no ; it was *not* there I got that scar : wait, and you shall know all about it, But I *was* nicked—a musket-ball through the thick of this left arm here ;

while Willy Mountjoy was presented with a sabre-wound—a sweeping cut in the ribs from a Neapolitan dragoon—that would have probably finished him had not a cash-belt, which he wore round his waist and next his skin, turned away the weapon and prevented serious mischief. Those two wounds we received, much about the same moment, on the far or right bank of the Volturno, which a party of us had crossed in hopes of defeating a flank movement that the enemy were attempting towards the close of the engagement ; both of us were, so to speak, completely knocked out of time, and I believe we gave one another up for dead, as men are apt to do under similar circumstances. Before our comrades advanced farther, two of them had roughly bound up our wounds, had bidden us be of good heart until they returned, and then had rushed forwards with the wild ringing *Evviva Garibaldi!* which seemed to fire the very blood of the General's enthusiastic followers.

They never returned ; for the Neapolitans took to the mountains trending round and rearwards in the direction of Maddaloni ; and when the pursuit was over, and the latter had fled out of sight, our detachment made its way back to St. Angelo by another route—clean forgetting all about Willy Mountjoy and myself.

We lay on the ground under some trees—at times half unconscious, at times dozing, at times stupefied with the pain of our wounds—until night began to fall, when the sharp chill air effectually aroused us. Then, despairing of the return of our friends, we managed to crawl back to the place where we had crossed the swift-flowing river on the rudest of rude military bridges, *i.e.* a double line of empty wine-casks, with a few rugged planks by way of a foot-road. As we crept

along, the fresh wind re-invigorated us; we became more cheerful, and we interchanged hopes that a couple of hours at furthest would find us on our own side of the Volturno, and in the enjoyment of the food and wine and surgical attention which we both so much needed.

It was almost dark by the time we reached the site of the bridge, the landmarks near which were not to be mistaken, and we scrambled down to the water's edge as well as we could.

"Why, confound it!" cried Willy, "there's no bridge here!"

"Nonsense!" said I; "this must be the place."

So it was undoubtedly—but the bridge was gone!

Long afterwards we learnt that the Garibaldini had themselves cut it away at dusk, so as to protect their flank from any night attack; and no question they were right in doing so.

But what was to become of us?

"Tell you what, old man," said Willy—I wasn't "an old man" *then*, for I had not turned thirty, but Mountjoy was little more than twenty, which made him take liberties, as he always did—"tell you what, we must just try back and see if we can't follow the tracks of our own people, and either pick them up or meet them returning."

I had my doubts of the wisdom of that counsel, but what was the use of expressing them when I had nothing different or better to suggest? We did "try back." The night came down black as Erebus almost immediately; and, to make a long story short, we lost our way in the mountains, lost our weapons simply because weariness, hunger, the pain of our wounds, and exhaustion compelled us, much against our will, and

even our reason, to abandon them ; and midnight found us sitting on the slope of a precipitous valley, silent, sullen, despairing, and worn to death with our wanderings.

“ By the Lord Harry ! voices below, and lights ! ”

Willy grasped me savagely by the arm—luckily the unwounded one—in his excitement, and looking down into the darkness, I could detect a flickering flame as of a half-shaded lamp, while I plainly heard one man speaking to another in good Italian. We determined to creep down as well as we could, follow the light, and then act as circumstances might dictate.

Hope gave us unexpected strength and activity ; we moved towards the bottom of the vale in a slanting direction, so as to partly cut off the wayfarers ; and we had the good luck to reach the level just as they stopped, a little way ahead of us, to knock with something hard against what we concluded was the door of a building, though we could see nothing, so densely dark was it.

“ Gabriella ! Gabriella ! ” cried the harsh voice of a man ; and almost immediately a flood of light came right in our eyes, and we could see a female standing in an open doorway holding a flaming torch high above her head.

“ O, come, that's all right ; lovely woman for mercy ! ”

And before I could restrain him, Willy Mountjoy was running towards the building, trying to jabber Italian—of which language he was profoundly ignorant.

Immediately the two men—peasants, as well as our hasty glimpse permitted us to judge—entered, and the heavy door was banged to. But we were desperate in our suffering, and I summoned the garrison to

admit us, with all the piteous pleadings of which I was master. The reply was startling—a window high up was opened, two shots were snapped at us, and the screech-owl voice we had heard before bade us begone for a couple of cut-throat brigands.

"No, no!" cried I; "we are Englishmen—we have plenty of money, and will amply pay you for lodging and food. Pray give us shelter and help!"

I suppose my foreign accentuation of his language, which otherwise I could speak well, must have convinced the owner of the discordant voice; for, after greedily repeating to himself "plenty of money," he almost immediately shouted to Gabriella to open the door, and we found ourselves in a large, warm hall, and being prettily welcomed by as handsome a girl as ever—but never mind *that*.

"The gentlemen will have food and wine?" her tones were soft and strangely winning as she asked the question; but then she stepped back with a little cry of horror, as her eye caught sight of the blood-stained rags which we had forgotten to conceal. Just at that moment the two men who had snapped at us from above re-entered the hall—as ill-looking a pair as ever I had seen, though both of them were evidently far superior to the rank of mere peasants.

"What, wounded! Are you, then, of the King's troops?" asked the foremost, a dark-browed, avaricious-looking fellow, whom we afterwards found out was the master, Mattia Fiorelli by name. The other spoke not but looked at us keenly and critically from under his grizzly eyebrows.

"Wounded, yes," I replied; "but we are on the deliverer's side; we are Englishmen fighting with Garibaldi for your freedom."

"Silence!" said the second man, as Mattia began to curse our general; "silence; you know not who is victor."

Our host restrained himself with an effort, and was beginning to say that he could not receive us, when Willy Mountjoy effected a diversion in our favour by fainting dead away, doubtless on account of the sudden change from the bitter night air of the mountain to the warmth of the house. The girl Gabriella, with a pitying cry, instantly ran to fetch some wine, and between us we revived the young fellow, while the two men stood apart whispering to one another.

But there was no more talk of turning us out; for in aiding Willy I had removed his cash belt, which fell clanking on the stone floor, and the unmistakable jingle of gold at once decided Mattia Fiorelli in our favour. We were shown into a side chamber. Gabriella, after much blowing and puffing at the dying embers of a fire, managed to get us some luke warm water, and the remains of an old but clean sheet. We rebound one another's wounds in the best fashion we could, and thus succeeded in making ourselves at least decently comfortable. Then we had supper of omelet, dried fruits, and coarse black bread, washed down with a judiciously small quantity of rather superior wine, after which we retired to the couches that Gabriella had prepared for us in the room where we had mutually acted as surgeons, the one to the other.

"Jove! that's a slashing fine craft!" said Willy, lying down on his sound side to try and get some sleep; "and she seems far above her position. Wonder if she'd marry me?"

"Don't be a fool!" was my testy reply, for I well

knew Master Willy's amorous proclivities when he was the handsomest mate on the China station, and I feared them. "If you dare speak a word of nonsense to that girl we shall both be probably kicked out, if we're not killed for it."

"Well, I won't, old Grumbles; so your precious skin will be safe."

He soon fell asleep; while I, my wound being really far more serious than his, did not close an eye the live-long night, but lay tossing to and fro in as restless and feverish a state as well might be. In the morning I was unable to lift my head from the pillow, and Willy Mountjoy looked exceedingly grave when he unbound my bandages, and saw the inflamed edges of the ragged hole which the Neapolitan bullet had made in passing through my arm. His own cut was, when examined in the daylight, clearly of little or no consequence.

Then in came Gabriella—beautiful as an angel, radiant as a Hebe—bearing a deliciously cooling drink made of fresh pomegranates, with which she freely wetted my lips; and then she sat down beside me, attended to my hurt with all the deft delicacy of a trained nurse, and sang to me in a low cooing voice, till drowsiness, and a sensation of relief unfelt throughout the long previous night, overcame my restless wakefulness, and I slumbered off.

I woke up with a start.

I was quite alone, the room was already darkening into twilight, and there were fierce, angry voices in contention just outside the door. One of them was that of Willy Mountjoy, one the screech-owl note of Mattia Fiorelli, and a third was Gabriella's, imploring her "dear cousin" to calm himself, and forgive the signor who meant no harm.

"Good heavens!" I thought, "can Willy have been mad enough to insult the girl?"

In my agitation I forgot all about my wound, jumped from my couch, pushed open the door, and found all three—Mattia's friend, who rejoiced in the name of Tito, was also there, but standing grimly on one side, taking no share in the hubbub.

Mattia, tearing at his long black hair and grinding his teeth furiously, was pouring out a torrent of abuse at Willy—calling him a thief, a robber, a brigand, a plundering Garibaldino, who had come there to rob a poor peasant of his little, his very little savings. My friend, who quite comprehended the abuse of the language, though he knew nothing else of it, was retorting in very downright Saxon; while Gabriella, her rich chestnut hair all tumbled about her shoulders, her deep violet eyes glistening with emotion, had flung herself between the pair, and with outstretched arms was endeavouring to keep them apart.

In a moment I was by her side and questioning her eagerly as to what had occurred, for I dared not trust myself to speak to Willy Mountjoy, whose guilt was to me a foregone conclusion.

"Ah, signor," she cried, "part them, for the love of the saints! The young officer in exploring our old house, came accidentally——"

"It is false! It is a lie! He planned to rob me!" interrupted Mattia, furiously, while Willy roared at him in return.

"No, no; by accident, my cousin," went on Gabriella. "He entered the room"—this to me—"where cousin Mattia was counting his wealth——"

"Only a few piastres, signor," whined Mattia, "that he wanted to plunder me of."

"It is untrue! He but looked at you," came from Gabriella. "It is a falsehood!"

Quick as lightning the savage fellow stepped up to her, and with an execration, struck the girl a severe blow across the face, which sent her reeling along the pavement until she fell with considerable violence. At the same moment Willy Mountjoy was pinioned from behind by the watchful Tito; but I, scarce knowing what I did, rushed at the assailant of Gabriella, and knocked him down as clean as ever I knocked a man down in my life.

The girl who had sprung to her feet again, screamed out that I was mad, that I knew not what I did, that her cousin had men in his pay who would kill me. But my blood was up; I cared little for the warning. With a single blow I released Willy from Tito, and he and I, dragging Gabriella between us—for we dared not leave her to the mercies of her savage cousin—went into the chamber from which I had issued when roused by the disturbance, and we immediately barred the door with a heavy piece of furniture.

Gabriella's version of the affair turned out to be strictly accurate. Willy, wandering idly about the rambling old building—which had been converted into a sort of residence out of the ruins of an ancient castle, with which it communicated in all directions—had come upon a half-concealed door leading into a vault, and on entering it through sheer curiosity he found himself in the presence of Mattia, who was engaged gloating over a large quantity of gold and silver coin and of magnificent antique plate. Our host had turned upon him so ferociously that my friend had instinctively beaten a retreat, only to be followed by

Mattia into the hall with vociferous accusations of being a Garibaldian thief.

"Is your cousin so wealthy?" I asked of Gabriella.

She smiled bitterly as she replied: "He is not; I am. All that money and plate—I know not how much of both—is mine by right, for I am the heiress of the Caraffas, but he is my legal guardian; and, O, signor!" she went on, while great heavy tears filled her deer-like eyes, "it will soon be really his, for he is to marry me on the first of the new year."

"To marry you! What—that brute?" we ejaculated together.

"Si, signor, it is all arranged, and on the——"

"O, I say, that's all confounded nonsense, you know." said Willy.

"Do be quiet, and let us understand the affair," was my impatient remark. And then Gabriella assured us that it was quite true, that she could not help herself, and that she must marry him—though she hated him intensely, for his treatment to her was cruel in the extreme, and the blow we had seen her receive was but one of many. He had gained over her only remaining relative, an old uncle who lived in Naples, and she was already formally betrothed to him.

"But it shall be prevented," I warmly declared; "and as soon as ever I can—ay, this very day—I will return to the Garibaldian army, and——"

"Or better," put in Willy, "you stay and protect her, and I will go back across the Volturno for help to get her out of the curmudgeon's hands."

"But will Garibaldi win? I hope not."

"You hope not, Gabriella?" I asked, in some astonishment.

She drew herself up proudly. "We Caffaras are loyal and hate the Revolution."

"You are, then, of noble blood?"

"Certainly. And were it not for the Mattia, who insists that we shall live and dress like mere peasants, we might still appear in our proper rank of life."

"But you would accept Garibaldi's help to free yourself from this man?"

To answer my question cost her an evident struggle, but eventually she replied in the affirmative, adding that she would do anything to free herself from the brutal tyranny of Mattia Fiorelli. That, at least, was a point gained; but it occurred to me at once that the row—I really can call it nothing else—which had taken place between our host and Willy and myself was a very bad commencement to any project for getting the poor girl out of the clutches of the former. What was to be done?

"I tell you what it is, Willy," I remarked, after we had sought in vain for some time to solve the difficulty. "We must play on his weak points."

"I should like to punch his head."

"For goodness' sake don't be an ass. He is a miser, fond of money, and would probably do anything for it. How much have *you* got?"

"About forty pounds, all told."

"And I have much about the same. You stay here with Gabriella, while I go and have a parley. I will say you apologise, are sorry for your folly——"

"But I'm *not*! Besides, it was you bowled him over——"

"And are anxious to make him a money compensation. That will bring him to his senses."

"If anything does," sighed the girl, "it will be gold."

"And then," I went on, "you can slip away to-morrow morning—it is too dark now—make your way to the camp, and come back with assistance."

So it was arranged, and I cautiously went out into the hall as soon as Willy had removed the barricade from the door, taking with me ten English sovereigns from his cash-belt as a sop to this Italian Cerberus. I found him alone, brooding over the embers of the cooking fire in one corner of the hall, and I noticed with considerable dismay—for a little, old-fashioned oil-lamp on a wall-bracket threw a tolerable light over him—that he had armed himself with a pair of pistols, and a long knife stuck in his red waistband.

Tito was nowhere to be seen—an augury of evil, I thought. But I was wrong; for on approaching Signor Fiorelli, carelessly jingling the gold up and down in my pocket as I crossed towards him, I found that he was even more accessible to the influence of money than I had anticipated; and, after some little conversation, in which I made the most abject and proper apologies for my knockdown blow and for Willy's mistake, he very readily nay, greedily, pocketed the sum I had brought, and consented to forgive and forget what had happened. Delighted with this happy result of my negotiation, I took the little lamp and returned to the chamber where I had left Willy and Gabriella, to tell them the good news; but to my astonishment, the latter turned as white as snow—she was of that magnificent style of beauty only to be seen in *blonde* Italian women of high birth—and cried out, as I held the light up:

"O saints, be merciful! the signor is wounded afresh!"

I followed her eyes down to my left arm—blood was

plentifully staining through the bandages over my wound, which had evidently broken out afresh in consequence, no doubt, of the excitement and exertion I had gone through. I staggered to the couch, fell on it, and I know nothing more of what took place for the next few days. Then, when I was a little recovered, though still deplorably weak, I became conscious one morning that Willy was by my bedside—to relieve Gabriella, who, he said, had nursed me day and night—and he told me how the ruffian Mattia had overreached us both.

On the night of my attack of faintness he had evinced the greatest solicitude for my perilous state; had busied himself in helping the others to try and revive me; had been perfectly friendly with Willy, and was kind to Gabriella; and had assured my friend that he would be only too glad if the latter would go back to the Garibaldian camp—a distance, by the way, of over six miles, but well between us and the Neapolitans—the next morning, and bring a surgeon to see to my wound. But that next morning told a different tale, for on Willy starting out after the usual early meal to commence his journey, taking with him the best wishes of our host, he found himself stopped when not a hundred yards from the door by the amiable Tito, who politely but firmly informed him that he must go no further, as it was impossible to permit the brigand Garibaldini to come up and plunder Mattia Fiorelli!

Willy, in his hot-blooded English style, was on the point of knocking the fellow down for his impudence, when Tito whistled shrilly, and at once there started from behind some adjacent rocks half a dozen armed peasants, who, without saying a word, cocked their guns

as they presented them at the young Lieutenant's breast. Willy perforce had to return to the hall.

"And since?" I feebly asked, for I was desperately weak.

"And since, those confounded rascals are on watch day and night. We are prisoners, old fellow."

Just then Gabriella—my saving angel—came back to the room, and I could tell by the pallor of her cheek, and the heavy look of her eyes, how closely, how carefully, how tenderly, must have been her nursing of me. I thanked her as well as my want of strength would permit, and I was rewarded with such a gloriously generous look as set my weakened pulse beating. Why should I delay my confession?—you may as well have it sooner as later. From that very moment a strong affection for the handsome distressed girl took possession of me, and in a very brief period I loved her with a passion I had never before even dreamed of.

And I had good reason to. The state of my wound was growing extremely critical; actual inflammation seemed to be setting in; I was growing more and more feverish and mentally exciteable day by day, and I required the most careful attention and nursing to give me a chance of ever completely recovering the use of the injured limb. Poor Willy did all he could for me, I must say; but at the best his efforts were more damaging than beneficial, for he had no delicacy of touch whatever, and would drag off the bandages from my arm as though he were hauling in the slack of a sheet in half a gale of wind. Besides that—in spite of his roughness he had a wonderful winning way about him, had Master Willy Mountjoy—he had managed to make friends, after a fashion, with the grizzly Tito, and he was allowed—much to Mattia Fiorelli's disgust—to

accompany the former in his expeditions about the mountains, though never without a guard of at least three of the armed peasants, who gave many a proof that they were thoroughly good marksmen, and that their carbines were anything but "blunderboxes." It wearied the poor lad to sit for long by my couch, the more so that he was utterly unable to do the simplest thing for me without causing pain; and he soon came to learn that, beyond a few cheery words morning and night, I was much easier without him than with him.

How different was Gabriella! Had she undergone a regular training she could not have been a much better nurse, and she performed for me offices usually most loathsome to a woman not professionally brought up. Thst is to say, she disappeared one morning—long after the night when I had revenged her cousin's blow—and did not return until the afternoon, when she produced a number of leeches (native ones, I believe, they must have been, and caught on her own bare feet in some stagnant pool), and she applied them round my wound at intervals until the inflammation nearly subsided. Then she would make me delicious drinks, cooling applications for head and arm, dish up dainty little messes to tempt my want of appetite; would sit by my bedside for hours talking quietly, and lovingly even, while she worked with her needle; and often—but never now unless I asked, nay, pressed her—she would sing to me in her rare contralto voice such glorious songs, make for me such floods of rich vocal music, as I had never before imagined possible of accomplishment by human being, though the angels, I thought, might have so sung in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

This was love—downright unmistakable love—and I,

who of old had laughed to scorn "the tender passion," as some idiot has called it, now felt its full force, and that force was anything but a "tender" one.

Presently—it must have been towards the end of November, for I kept no reckoning of how the happy, dreamy, loving days went by—I grew much better, was able to sit up for long hours together, then to totter about the ramshackle building with the aid of a stick, and was at last delighted to find that my wound was quite healed, and the arm nearly as strong as ever. And then Gabriella, quietly and by almost imperceptible degrees, began to leave me more and more to my own devices, until finally it was with great difficulty that I could find opportunities enough to partly gratify the passionate cravings of my love for her presence, for a glance from her violet eyes, for a touch from that soft warm hand.

It is not to be supposed that all this billing and cooing went on quite unobserved by Master Willy Mountjoy. On the contrary, he chaffed me unmercifully, telling me to make hay while the sun shone, for "t'other fellow was the man in possession"—that was his delicate phrase; and he would bet me five to one, as often as I chose to take it, that I would never be married to the girl, if indeed I had the impudence to think of such a thing.

This was pleasant! However I let him have his joke, warning him that "he who won might laugh." But I confess that I was considerably nonplussed when I found that Mattia Fiorelli had resumed all his old ill-treatment of the girl, even going so far as to frequently personally chastise her as though she were his slave, so that she frequently came flying into my room bathed in tears to seek shelter from his violence.

"My poor darling," I would say to her, "would to Heaven that I could free you from him! I *will*; I will attack him now——"

But she would interrupt me with the utmost air of alarm, saying :

"No, no, no! Alas, he always goes armed, and he would kill you! How could I bear *that*?"

"I am determined I will save you from—from—this horrid fate threatening you. I must, and shall. You would not hesitate, were the road cleared, to fly with me—and with Willy, for we could not leave him behind, and we can trust him."

"Trust him? O, yes," she replied; "Signor Willee is of those one can trust to the last."

I immediately set to work to soothe the natural savagery of the brute Mattia, and I succeeded—by frequently cooling his anger with driblets of gold from my store—far better than I had expected. In fact, after a while, he gave up beating her altogether, rarely even he abused her, and in time became so softened under the treatment I exhibited (as the doctors say), that he even avoided speaking to her in his usual cross manner, and he was good enough to say that the change was entirely owing to my intercession.

More than that, he became a sort of friend of mine; took me out for air and exercise occasionally; but I never could get him to give me the slightest intimation of what was going on in the political world, or whether Garibaldi had been successful, or had been driven back. Whichever, if either, had happened, Mattia Fiorelli would not let us go from the hall-door except when closely guarded; and Willy and I began to feel certain that he was keeping us prisoners in

hopes of extorting a heavy ransom for us from our friends in England.

* * * * *

"What is it, my own precious?" I asked one dark afternoon, when Gabriella appeared with a face swollen from weeping.

She checked herself, and replied with another question: "Do you not know that in ten days it will be—will be—" she shuddered from head to foot, and her voice stopped under the influence of horror—"will be the new year—when—when—"

"Gabriella! That crime shall never be committed, and I alive to see it. You shall *not* marry this man. You shall fly from here with me. I will risk all sooner than that he shall have you for a slave?"

"O, pray save me, save me!" she hysterically implored; "I would sooner die a thousand times—I *will* die, by my own hand—sooner than be defiled by his embrace!"

I calmed her as well as I could—I soothed her, probably as Adam soothed Eve, and as the Last Man will soothe and calm the Last Woman—and with the burning kiss I printed on her forehead I printed a determination on my own heart to save her even if I died by torture for it.

That very night I laid a plot, to which Willy (who contributed not an iota to it) cordially assented, and the next day I commenced to work it. I began to ceaselessly jingle gold under Mattia's very nose on every opportunity; I congratulated him on his approaching wedding, but never failed to deplore the vast expense he would be put to in consequence; and I insinuated that Willy and I would make him a handsome present, in addition to that which our peculiar

insular customs compelled us to give him on Christmas Day.

That caught him. I never ceased harping on the joint theme of presents, and “our peculiar Christmas customs ;” and when his curiosity became excited, and he asked what the latter were, I gave him such an outrageous list of things we wanted, and *must* have, to duly observe the Pagan Festival of Christmas according to the Rites of the Ancient Britons—still essential ceremonies, I said, in England—as would have astonished the whole Society of Antiquaries. At all events, it astonished Mattia Fiorelli to an extraordinary degree—though it was told to him only piecemeal, and day by day—and he flung up his hands in amazement that we could be so mad as to spend so much money on heathen orgies of eating and drinking.

What I was driving at, and so far successfully, you shall now see.

We were sitting over the fire, for it was desperately cold, in the panelled chamber between which and the outward door lay the hall—Mattia, Tito, Willy Mountjoy, and myself—on Christmas Eve ; while Gabriella was gone into another room to prepare the evening meal, usually partaken of at nine o’clock. Our host was sitting in the right corner, with me for his nearest neighbour ; Tito was facing him, smoking incessantly from a reed-stemmed red-clay pipe, and Willy seemed absorbed in contemplation of that amiable man’s countenance. The two Italians were armed with their usual stilettos, while we were without weapons of any kind. All was profound silence, for with Gabriella’s departure conversation had ceased.

“Willy,” I said, “we must commence our Christmas customs.”

"Yes it is time," was his unusually grave reply ; and he began with the most admirable solemnity to make the most grotesque, not to say idiotic, contortions at me, the while I hummed loudly—this was to warn Gabriella—a discordant chant quite as dismal as the best of Druids could ever have given vent to.

The Italians stared at us and our performances as they would at a couple of raving madmen.

Presently we got up, and began to slowly move to and fro, waving our arms above our heads, in rythmic measure.

"Now," I shouted.

In an instant Willy had hurled Tito to the ground, disarmed him, and was threatening him with his own weapon ; while I, at the same moment, dashed my fist at Mattia's head : but he partly ducked ; the blow only told with a quarter of the intended force, and I rolled across him as he lay sprawling on the stone floor.

I grappled with him ; my strength seemed tripled as the chamber-door opened and Gabriella appeared there, pale as a ghost, and trembling all over. Looking up for a second, I saw Willy, as had been arranged, rapidly gagging the mouth, and securing the arms and feet, of his antagonist with a long light rope which he handled with all the dexterous skill of the professional sailor. So in less time than I have taken to tell it, Tito was silenced, and bound in such fashion as rendered self-release impossible. At this juncture there was a knock at the outward door of the hall, beyond the scene of the conflict. For Mattia had not been mute during the struggle with me, and no doubt the three guards outside heard something of the scuffle —the other three had gone down to Capua, with our

host's consent, to buy for us all the extraordinary load of things we wanted "for our Christmas customs."

"Willy! Gabriella!" I said, sufficiently loud to be heard by the two, "you must escape by the window of that inside room! Quick, or all will be lost! Do you not hear the knocking? Take the path we arranged, and I will follow—"

"But I cannot leave you—"

"Nonsense, Willy, nonsense! I shall have him fast bound in a moment. Fly, I command you, to save that poor girl!"

He ran to her side, and seized her by the arm to obey my order. She struggled to come forward, but he held her back and dragged her towards the window inside, which he seemed to experience some difficulty in opening.

At that moment, my head being turned away, Mattia made a last effort; he regained his feet, while he tossed me over his knee, and I was barely able to spring up in time when he dashed at me afresh, with the drawn stiletto in his fist.

Willy Mountjoy forced open the back window—it was at the rear of the far chamber, and the noise could not be heard in front—but in doing so he had to release Gabriella.

I retreated to the panelled wall, pursued by Mattia, whose eyes actually blazed with rage and fury. He overtook me, made a fearful blow at me with his stiletto; fortunately missed my throat, at which, *more Italiano*, it was aimed, but drove it clean through the palm of this hand, which it pinioned firmly to the old massive wainscot.

"O heavens!" cried Gabriella, running towards me from the doorway; "he has stabbed him!"

"Drag her away, drag her away, Willy!" I cried, as I grasped Mattia with my left hand and swung him round under me. "Drag her away, as fast as you can! Never mind me—I can follow—"

"No, no! For the saints' sake, no!"

Her further cries were effectually stopped by Willy Mountjoy, who snatched her up in his arms; and I was left alone—pinned to the wall, much as a weasel is pinned to a barn-door—left alone to hold in check, as best I might, a desperate villain in possession of the full use of all his limbs.

I had hurled him under my right arm with my left on his coat-collar, as I have said, and with such force that he was half senseless as his skull crashed against the woodwork; and then I was still too, the better to listen for my Gabriella and Willy Mountjoy.

All was silent—they had escaped; and, from the cessation of the knocking at the door, it seemed plain that the three guards had come to the conclusion that Tito and Mattia did not wish their aid in whatever work was going on. For had these worthies followed Gabriella they must have captured her and her protector at once, and have been back at the front door with their prisoners by this time.

I need not spin out my yarn. Suffice it to say that in about half an hour's time, during which I endured fearful tortures, fruitlessly trying to wrench my hand free from the stiletto—I dared not loose my left-hand grip on my foe until *that* was accomplished—Mattia became again conscious, and renewed the struggle with what appeared to me to be even greater strength than before, while I was weakened by the blood streaming from the hole made by his cursed stiletto.

And I had but one hand to fight him !

He had mastered me—almost mastered me. I was mad in my impotent rage and despair ; a wild cry as from Gabriella—was it an angel saving, or a demon mocking me ?—of “ O Heaven, he has stabbed him ! ” seemed to pierce through my very brain ; I made a last, a fearful effort. Gathering all my strength, I dashed the ruffian to the floor, and like lightning drew out the stiletto. Then, with the flesh quivering and raining with blood, I added the might of the right hand to that of my left, and with both I hammered his head against the stone pavement till I thought him killed.

Then, when I had bound up my hand as tight as possible, I must have swooned dead away, for I knew no more until I sprang to my feet with shots ringing in my ear, and found the gray dawn of Christmas peeping through the windows of the blood-stained hall. The accomplice Tito glared at me from where he had lain all night so safely bound and gagged, as much as to say, “ Ah, now it's all up with you ! ” and I was very much of that opinion myself.

I was mistaken ; the shots were fired by the Piedmontese mounted police, who had been met, when patrolling during the night along the Volturno, by Willy and Gabriella, and despatched to my relief, while the fugitive couple went on to Capua, which had fallen some time before, to take the first train to Naples.

The guards outside were easily overmastered—the three I had sent to Capua got drunk, as I meant they should, and never returned—the police broke in to my rescue, and then it was found that my foe Mattia had sustained a severe concussion of the brain, from which he was likely to die.

"And she married at once, and all was happy?" said—

"She married—yes—" was the Major's somewhat dry reply.

"Of course. But tell us *when* you—"

"—The other fellow!"

"You *don't* mean to say that scoundrel Mattia?"

"No; she married Willy Mountjoy, before she had been three hours in Naples!"

A SPECTRE IN A MESS-ROOM.

A TRUE STORY.

IN the month of April, 187—, a group of officers were assembled at chota-hazri, under the pleasant shade of a couple of luxuriant mango-trees. On the white cloth that covered the table were eatables of various kinds, the most inviting being some melons—water, as well as musk—which smelt deliciously. Overhead, deftly slung from a wooden framework, with lazy even beat, oscillated a light deep-fringed punkha. It was pulled by a semi-somnolent Hindoo coolie, attired in little else save his own bronze-coloured skin ; yet, such was the force of habit, he did not give one the impression of being at all too scantily clad. A short distance off—ten yards or so—stood a large handsome bungalow ; this was the mess-house of the officers, who belonged to the —— Regiment of Lancers, quartered just now at Mirabad, one of the pleasantest stations in the north-western provinces of India.

The group referred to were in their white summer uniform, which, in the glare of the fierce sunlight, rather dazzled and distressed the eye ; but in the shadow of the dark-green overhanging foliage the effect was both cool and picturesque.

The leave season had just commenced, and the young

fellows, while refreshing the inner man, were gaily reckoning up their chances of visiting the various hill-stations—Simla, Mussoorie, Nynetal, or even going as far as that famous paradise of sportsmen, Cashmere ; exception, however, must be made in respect of two of their number, who, comparatively silent, were seated a little apart, and on whose countenances there was no sign of merriment visible.

Suddenly a horse's hoofs pattered along the drive leading to the bungalow, and a second later the rider came in view. He dismounted a short distance from the party, and, handing his horse to a servant, approached the chota-hazri table.

"Well, doctor?" interrogatively said one of the quieter men, addressing the new-comer.

"Not well ; indeed, just the contrary, I am sorry to say," replied Dr. Anderson, gravely : "poor Mrs. Morgan is dead."

There was a slight pause.

"Terrible business for Morgan," presently remarked the first speaker, in a thoughtful voice ; "she was all in all to him. I'm afraid he'll go to the bad."

Some years ago, when Thomas Morgan first joined the —— Lancers as their veterinary surgeon, the verdict of the officers, not given hastily, but after due deliberation, was that he was by no means an acquisition to the corps ; in truth, the more severely critical, if asked their private opinion, would have had but little hesitation in pronouncing him coarse, self-sufficient, and unsteady.

As time passed, the general impression regarding the vet's character became confirmed ; moreover, it seemed as if he were deteriorating to even a lower level. Then Morgan unexpectedly did that which

raised him a hundred per cent in the estimation of every one. He married a woman whom almost any man would have been proud to call his wife.

Handsome, ladylike, and accomplished, Mrs. Morgan also possessed tact and discrimination, and in a little while she became quite a favourite in the regiment. That a man of Morgan's calibre should have persuaded a woman of this stamp to marry him was something in his favour; soon, too, it became abundantly clear that the lady thoroughly understood her husband's weak points, for she managed him with so much judgment that the improvement in him became marked; indeed, after a few months of married life, the vet surgeon was voted quite altered, and rather "a good fellow."

And now, as the doctor had stated, a bitter affliction had befallen the husband; the wife, whom he had so loved and looked up to, had died, after giving birth to a still-born child, and he, unstable and weak-principled, was left alone, a prey to intense grief. Under the circumstances, therefore, it was not surprising that the men at the breakfast-table who heard the observation, "Poor Morgan will certainly go to the bad," should feel that the dismal prediction was only too likely to be verefied.

An interval of two or three years has elapsed since the sad event chronicled above, and I now come to the incident on which the interest of this narrative chiefly depends. At this time the — Lancers were quartered at Aldershot, having returned home from their foreign service in India. The mess-house of the regiment was situated in the centre of the front row of the block of buildings known as the West Cavalry

Barracks. These face the Avenue Road, and are only a few hundred yards to the east of All Saints', the garrison church. The mess-room was a large lofty apartment, rectangular in shape, with one of its lesser sides almost occupied by a great arched window, which was heavily curtained. In the centre of the room was a long dining-table ; it stood in such a position that an individual sitting at the top-end would be facing the window, and, of course, one sitting at the bottom would have his back towards it.

One evening, rather late in October, a number of officers were seated in this mess-room at dinner. At the top of the table, filling the post of president, was Lieutenant Robert Norris, the orderly officer of the day. He was a pleasant fair-haired young fellow, and on this occasion seemed particularly cheerful, for early next day he was to start for Ireland on a month's leave. To his right sat a guest of his, Captain Wilson : the latter had come down to Aldershot on a visit to his friend, and intended accompanying Norris across the Channel on the ensuing morning. There was no one at the foot of the table, but the chairs on either side of the vice-president's were occupied, one by Dr. Anderson, the senior surgeon of the regiment, the other by a young officer of the same corps called Beamish. In the intermediate seats were a few other men whose names it is unnecessary to specify. It ought also to be mentioned that the evening twilight outside was only partially excluded, the curtains being but half drawn.

The conversation had been brisk and lively, the most prominent Aldershot topics had been discussed, and there had occurred one of those momentary intervals of silence, which are not uncommon during dinner,

when the company was startled by the loud exclamation of one of its members.

"Good God, man, are you ill? what on earth is the matter?"

The speaker was young Beamish. He was addressing his *vis-à-vis*, Dr. Anderson, towards whom all eyes were at once turned.

There was a white, scared look on the surgeon's face, and he was staring at the window with eyes half out of their sockets. It was evident he had received a shock of some kind.

"No—nothing," he answered, with an effort; but—"ah! did you see *that woman*?"

"See a woman—where?" asked the other wonderingly.

"I saw her all right, Anderson," exclaimed Norris, from the top of the table—"rather pallid-looking, and dressed in a sort of bridal dress that seemed slightly stained; she certainly looked in at us as she walked past the window."

"What unmitigated nonsense!" cried Beamish, energetically. "You're both mad—the window is at least thirty feet from the ground, and there is no balcony outside, but merely a narrow ledge, along which it would be impossible for any one, except a ghost to walk."

"By Jove! I never thought of that," said Norris, starting up impulsively. He ran to the window and began pushing aside the curtains. "But you saw her too, Anderson," he continued in an amazed tone, "and somehow the features seemed familiar."

"Yes," replied the surgeon; I certainly saw a woman dressed in white pass quite close by to the window and glance in for an instant. But it was the

strange woeful expression in the eyes as they met mine that startled and disturbed me. I fancied I recognised in her some one I knew; yet, for the life of me, I can't call to mind who she is."

The doctor, who had quite recovered his composure, spoke in a clear collected voice. He, too, now rose from his seat and approached the window. Then there ensued a scene of considerable excitement, in which surprise and curiosity were largely blended. The dinner-table was quickly deserted, the window thrown open, and all the servants summoned. The premises were examined, and all kinds of nooks and corners invaded and ransacked, for the discovery of the intruder, the more especially as Beamish suggested somebody might be attempting to play off a practical joke on them. The search, however, proved fruitless. There was no trace of the mysterious female who had given so rude a shock to one of the party and ruffled the serenity of all.

Of course, almost with one accord, they scouted the notion that the apparition could possibly have an immaterial personality. *Who ever heard of a spectre in a mess-room?* The idea was preposterous—absurd; and then, how idle and objectless seemed a visitation whose purpose no one could recognise! They were either the victims of a hoax, or, as was more likely, of a spectral or optical illusion. So far the officers. The question, however, might fairly be asked, which of the following contingencies was the more improbable—the appearance of a disembodied spirit, given that disembodied spirits exist; or that two individuals of totally different types, in the perfect possession of their senses, sitting far apart, should, amid the distraction of dinner, brilliant lights and gay conversation, conjure up,

exactly at the same moment, a spectral illusion, which, in face, figure, and dress, should be absolutely identical? Moreover, as will be shown a little later, the vision was not so entirely without purpose as at first sight they judged it to be.

To resume. The commotion gradually subsided and the officers again took their seats, but their cheerfulness seemed to have vanished and the talk flagged; if a stray remark were passed it led to nothing.

"I wonder if the apparition portends misfortune to either of you two?" said Beamish, derisively glancing towards Norris and Anderson.

Neither answered.

Presently Wilson addressed his host.

"You have to visit the guards to-night. When do you start?"

"After midnight," answered Norris, briefly.

"I'll go round with you."

But the other wouldn't hear of it. However, nothing untoward happened, and early next morning the two friends left for Ireland.

A month later, his leave having expired, Norris rejoined his regiment. On arriving, one of the first persons he encountered was the surgeon, with whom of course he entered into conversation.

After a little he said rather abruptly :

"Ah, Anderson, how about the apparition? did you unravel the mystery of its appearance?"

"I thought you knew; surely you have heard all about it?" replied his companion, with an air of surprise.

"Not a word, not a syllable," said the other. "To tell the truth, the matter has troubled me but little; still, I'm glad it admits of a rational explanation."

"A rational explanation?" echoed the doctor, with a queer smile. He drew from his pocket a large gold locket, and having opened it he handed it to his friend. "Just look at that," he continued.

"Good Heavens!" cried Norris, gazing at the miniature, "it is the spectre! Why, it is the portrait of Mrs. Morgan, who died in India! I'm more puzzled than ever."

"I suppose, then, I'd better begin at the beginning and explain," said the surgeon. "As you are aware, Morgan—who has been steadily going downhill since his wife's death—was induced, about two months ago, to leave Aldershot on sick-leave for change of air and scene. Well, after that extraordinary experience of ours at dinner, I passed a restless uncomfortable night, sleeping very badly; I therefore got up earlier than usual, intending to take a brisk walk before going to hospital. Soon after I left the barracks I met Burke, Morgan's servant, and casually asked him if he had any news of his master. To my astonishment he informed me that Morgan had returned to Aldershot four days ago, and at the present moment was lying in his quarters seriously unwell. Of course I went to him immediately, and then the true state of affairs at once became clear. Morgan, perhaps hardly responsible for his actions, had concealed his arrival that he might, unchecked, give free vent to his intense craving for stimulants, and now he was so ill that I had very little hope of his recovery. After doing all I could for him, I was turning to leave the room when my eyes fell on the large coloured photograph of his wife, that stood on a side-table. Then, in an instant, like a flash came the conviction that Mrs. Morgan and the apparition were identical, and that it was her features, seen dis-

tinctly as she walked past the window, that I had been trying in vain to recall ; in the likeness she was dressed as a bride in white. You know I was with the poor lady in her last illness, and I take it the meaning of the vision was to call my attention to the fact that her husband was dying uncared for and alone, within a few hundred yards of where we were dining so merrily."

"It is a strange occurrence, the very strangest in my experience," said Norris, thoughtfully. "I remember the photo you mention quite well ; this one in the locket is the same, only reduced in size. I believe I knew more of Morgan than most of the others, as our rooms opened into the same corridor, and I was, in a way, his next neighbour ; perhaps that may be one reason why I also saw the apparition. How long is it since Morgan died ?"

"He expired a fortnight ago," replied the surgeon—"quietly, I am thankful to say, and with his faculties clear."

C. C. D.

OUR DOCTOR.

BY AN ARTILLERY OFFICER.

CHAPTER I.

HE was the strangest man I ever met, and one sees a good many curious specimens of human nature in the army; but such a mixture of good and bad, of the noblest qualities and the most degrading vices, as were united in Dr. Repton, I never expect to find again, nor, indeed, should I care to do so, for a character like his is too puzzling to the intellect and too unsettling to the mind to be altogether pleasant.

We were quartered in Elizabeth Castle at Jersey when first I met him. It was a desolate place then, and I don't know that it has much improved since, or, indeed, that anything could improve it short of a convulsion of Nature, seeing that it is founded on a little island of its own, and only connected with the land once a day at low water, by a mile or so of rock-strewn sand, unpleasant to the foot and aggravating to the temper. In so isolated a spot it was very necessary to have everything pertaining to the comfort of the men in the fort itself, and so we were provided with school, hospital, and chapel, all complete. Religion being in the British army almost entirely a matter of Sundays, the chaplain was able to live at his ease in St. Helier's;

but, after a long period of years, the authorities discovered that accidents did now and then occur, that men got apoplectic fits and delirium tremens at the most inconvenient times, and that children were occasionally born into the world at hours that could not be laid down in orders. On the whole, then, it was at length determined that a doctor should be sent to live in the fort. And so he came.

Our battery was, for a wonder, complete in its roll of officers just then, and, what was a greater wonder still, all of them were unmarried, so that we had a better muster at mess than the castle usually saw. I shall just mention their names here ; perhaps I may have a word to say as to their individualities on some future occasion. They were Major Anstey, Captain Urmston, and Lieutenant Cayley. The other subaltern was myself. It is a generally recognised rule that every officer in the Royal Artillery is mad, married, or Methodist ; and the second being out of the question, we had our choice of the other two alternatives. I cannot attempt to decide here to which class we belonged.

We were sitting at dinner one evening, when the mess-man brought in a card. On it was written simply "E. M. Repton, Army Medical Department." I wondered at the time at the absence of the usual prefix of "Mr.," but it was characteristic of the man, as I found out afterwards.

Of course we invited him in at once, only too glad to see a new face. It is wonderful how tired of each other three or four men can become, when they are forced by pressure of circumstances to live much in each other's company. If they are good-tempered they settle down to a passive endurance of their neighbours'

particular hobbies; if otherwise, to a miserable succession of quarrels and mutual annoyances. I have seldom seen a true friendship spring up under such conditions of intimacy. It is the old story: to have a real friend the less you see of him and he of you the better.

But I am forgetting the doctor, who is all this time standing in the doorway ready to be introduced to my readers. He was a tall man of about forty years of age, strongly made, with a pleasing face enough; clean-cut features, a trifle hard, perhaps; gray eyes; and a long, drooping, black moustache already turning to white. He had a high intellectual forehead, whose lines could be well traced, for his hair was very thin and scanty, and brushed back so as not to make the most of what he still possessed. He was dressed in a suit of dark tweed, very baggy at the knees and very shiny about the seams, and, altogether, he looked like a man decidedly down in the world. Still, he had about him that ease of manner, or whatever it may be called, which even at first sight distinguishes a gentleman.

Having shaken hands with us all, and apologised for his late intrusion, he sat down to the table with us. He had only just been able to get across to the castle, he said, as the causeway had not opened until half-past six, or he would have joined us sooner. His baggage he had sent over the day before, in order to have his room a little furnished previous to his arrival.

"You are not a married man, then, doctor?" said Major Anstey.

I thought I saw a slight change in the expression of the gray eyes, as he answered, "No, Major; I am quite of Sir Dinadan's opinion about that."

This was promising, I thought. The man must be a well-read one, or he would not have referred to a book so little known as the *Morte d'Arthur*. Evidently I was the only person who understood the allusion, but I did not care to say so. I had learned by experience that men do not like others to know more than themselves, and that, for the sake of peace and comfort, the less knowledge of literature that was displayed in the mess-room the better.

No one having responded to his remark, the doctor went on with his dinner. I noticed that he tried two or three topics of conversation, until he struck on one which seemed to suit his company, and then enlarged on it with a good deal of ability and witty sarcasm. I sat quiet, not being exactly sure whether he was really deriving information from the others or laughing at them. I half suspected the latter and had no mind for it. I am afraid I was a very conceited specimen of humanity at that period, and thought myself superior, both in talents and acquirements, to my companions. I determined that I would get the doctor all to myself some day, and see what he was made of.

When the dinner things were removed our new acquaintance expressed his intention of going to see how his room was getting on, and whether his furniture had been safely unpacked. We bade him good-night, and settled down to a smoke, and a talk over him. On the whole, the verdict was favourable, though Captain Urmston, who was himself something of a dandy, wondered how on earth he could wear such seedy clothes ; and Major Anstey remarked that, considering the time he had been in the room, he had managed to get through a good many glasses of

sherry. Then we had our usual rubber of whist, and after that I went to bed.

Next morning we had a gun-drill parade—three hours' weary manoeuvring of two forty-pounders in the barrack square. When it was over I exchanged my uniform for plain clothes, and went to look up the doctor in his quarters.

They consisted of two rooms in the same block of buildings as my own. I knocked at the door, a hoarse voice cried, "Come in," and I entered.

I have always found that in no way can you obtain a better clue to the real character of a man than by a careful and discriminating study of the manner in which he furnishes his dwelling, above all, if he be a lover of books. Show me the books that a man cares to carry about with him, the music he cares to play and the songs to sing, and the pictures he loves to look at, and I will give you a fairly correct sketch of what he is himself. Even so long ago as the time about which I now write, I had accustomed myself to such observation, and therefore it is that I can paint Dr. Repton's room to-day as clearly as though it were still before me. This was what I saw.

One side of the chamber was occupied by an ordinary barrack bedstead standing against the wall. Near the head was the usual officer's portable washhand-stand, very much the worse for wear. Above the latter hung an exquisite copy of a Madonna, by Fra Angelico. There was a bookcase between the windows, containing, as I could see at a glance, a strange medley of volumes, professional, artistic, literary, and romantic, mingled with French novels and scurrilous song-books. Here were Dante's *Vita Nuova* and Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* side by side, Browning's poems and Alfred

de Musset, Swinburne's early works and Jean Ingelow *Two Years Ago* and *Nana*. Such a mixture of the best and the worst, the highest and lowest ideals at once, I had never seen before.

Over the fireplace hung a picture by some French painter, a "Cléopâtre," treated with all the sensual power of the school to which it belonged. It just faced the Madonna on the opposite wall, and the two types of womanhood seemed to be regarding one another with hostile eyes. On a small table in the corner stood a row of bottles whose labels betrayed their contents, a tumbler, and a decanter of water. This, with the addition of an easy chair or two, made up the furniture of the apartment. Through the open door I could see that the other room was occupied only by a pile of packing cases. Evidently the doctor was not going to use it at all; he was content with his single chamber.

When I entered, he was standing by the fire with a violin in his hand, idly trying some intervals on the string without using the bow.

He looked round as I opened the door, and laid down the instrument.

"Good-morning, B.," said he. "I saw you from the window playing at soldiers with the guns in the square. Have something to drink?"

I declined, on the plea of its being too early in the morning. Repton, however, filled for himself a stiff tumbler of brandy-and-water, sat down in an easy-chair, motioned me to another, and began to talk.

"Pleasant sort of place this castle of yours seems to be. You don't suffer much from over-excitement in it, I should think. Ah, I see you are admiring my 'Cleopatra.' Is it not a fine picture?"

I confessed that I did not much care for the style of the subject, and that as to the actual painting I was no judge of its merits.

"Such as it is, it cost me fifty pounds," said the doctor; "at least, that was the price that worthy descendant of Abraham, Solomon Levi, put upon it when he handed it over to me as part-payment for one of my valuable autographs." Then wheeling his chair round, and looking at me inquiringly, he asked, "Is its counterpart, the 'Madonna,' then, more to your taste?"

"Very much more," I answered. "I only wonder that you can keep the 'Cleopatra' and it in the same room."

"Why not? I have seen women like both of them. Every one has his own taste; and if I have not quite made up my mind as to which mine may be, I have just double the pleasure out of the combination. Don't you see what I mean?"

"I hear what you say, at any rate," I replied; "but as to the two tastes coexisting, I don't believe it."

"Ah, well, then you have something to learn yet," he answered. "What do you suppose all the old monsters that our forefathers used to believe in signified, unless it were just such a mixture of qualities? *Desinit in piscem mulier formosa supernè!* You understand Latin, no doubt, and know what that means. I find that the highest and lowest meet closely enough in most people."

"If they do," said I, "one must overpower the other before long; and it is likely to be the worse of the two. A rotten apple will make a great many sound ones decay; but I never heard of a sound one, or any number of them, making a decayed one good."

I was rather proud of having hit upon, as I thought, so unanswerable a symbol; but Repton only laughed.

"I'll tell you what, B.," said he, "of all forms of argument, the worst is that of similes. It is the mode women always adopt, because it sounds plausible and is easy of application. I will give you as good a one as yours on the opposite side. They make 'eau de millefleurs' out of the liquid refuse of cowhouses, as I daresay you know. You would have a man with only one side to his nature, and when you get one, I wish you joy of him; but for my part, I am inclined to say he is not to be found at all. I am a drunken old blackguard, and I don't much care who knows it; but I can appreciate a good woman, or a piece of Beethoven's music, or a fine poem, as well as anyone else. There is no such thing in nature as a refined taste degraded as you seem to think. Because I can go to a music-hall and listen to a song that the parsons would call demoralising, and amuse myself with it, do you think I care any the less for hearing a cathedral anthem the day after? Not a bit! I like them both in their own way. I grant you the anthem is the best music, and the cathedral is the best place; but I can enjoy both, and I say that, if I can, I am distinctly superior to the man who has room in his nature for only one."

"Well, I can only say that I don't agree with you," I answered. "But I didn't come here to argue. I got an invitation from Lady Thomas this morning for a picnic at St. Aubin's, and she tells me to bring our new doctor with us if he has come. Should you care to go? Urmston and I mean to take a trap out there about one o'clock."

Dr. Repton looked at me with a quizzical expression of countenance.

"Wouldn't you like me to go with you and be introduced as your friend?" said he. "In the very identical suit that I wore last night, for instance. I saw you all looking hard at its defects. I can tell you it was good material once, like the man inside of it, though it does look seedy enough now."

"I don't mind how a man dresses so long as he is a gentleman," I answered, warming up a little. "I brought you a civil invitation, and put it as civilly as I could, and for my part I should have liked your company; but, as you choose to consider me a snob, I won't ask you again!" And I turned towards the door with the air of a martyr.

Repton coolly got up, turned the key in the lock, removed it and sat down.

"You and I are not going to part in that way," he said. "I sincerely beg your pardon, B., if my chaff has offended you; but I didn't mean it. I thought when I saw you last night that you were a cut above those other fellows. Sit down, man, and we will have a reasonable talk together. As for your invitation, it is many a day since I went anywhere in society, and I am not going to begin it again. It didn't suit me, nor I it, when I tried it last. I hope you will come round to my room in the mornings, whenever you can; I like someone to talk to. I am not always fit for company in the afternoon." Here, to emphasise his assertion, he filled himself another tumbler of brandy and water.

"I will come in with pleasure now and then," I said; "but I wish you would tell me one thing, if it be not a rude question. How can you, an educated man, deliberately set yourself down to get drunk, when you

know, as a doctor, that it will ruin both your health and your intellect? You see, I don't accuse you of it myself; I only go by what you told me just now."

He laughed a little.

"When you can tell me, B., why you do half the actions of life—why you came into the service, where you have the maximum of discomfort and the minimum of pay; why you are going to this picnic this afternoon, to talk nonsense to ladies and eat your luncheon off a tin plate, without salt or mustard most likely, when you might have it comfortably at home: above all, when you can tell me why you will, in all probability, follow the ordinary course of human nature some day, and fall in love with a woman no better nor worse than a hundred others you have met and *not* fallen in love with—then, perhaps, I may answer your question. Meanwhile, you must take it for granted that no one acts exactly as his reason tells him is best, or practises what he preaches in this world. But I see you want to be going, so I will open the door. I beg your pardon for locking it, but it was the only way to keep you in whilst I made my apology. Mind, you promised to come and look me up again."

"I certainly shall," said I. "Good-bye for the present. I suppose I shall see you at mess to-night?"

"I don't think so," he replied. "I don't intend to belong to the mess. It wouldn't suit my habits of living at all, and I should only get turned out of it in the end. I couldn't well afford it either."

"Well, it's time for me to go and meet Urmston," I said. "We are going over by the twelve o'clock boat."

I left the room with my confidence in my powers of reading character considerably shaken.

CHAPTER II.

WE didn't see much of the doctor for a while after his arrival. He kept pretty close to his own quarters, and had a knack of crossing over in the boat at times when no one else was going. Plainly he wished to avoid the officers, and many were the criticisms directed at him in consequence. Urmston had looked out his name in the *Army List*, and found that, though forty years of age, he was still only a surgeon. Thereon evidently hung a tale, but it was a tale that none of us could guess at. We heard rumours now and then of his drinking propensities, but nothing very definite. I was away at Fort Regent on the mainland mounting guns every morning, and had no chance of calling on him again.

One evening I had been out rather later than usual, as the bridge was open and I could walk back. I got to the castle about half-past nine, and was going to my quarters, when I heard a great noise going on in the doctor's room. The door was half open, and I looked in, sure of not being seen myself, as the passage was dark.

It was a curious sight. Repton had gathered together a miscellaneous assemblage of gunners and officers' servants, and was entertaining them to his heart's content. He had placed a barrack chair on the top of his table, and seated himself in it, and was now playing vigorously the waltz of "Ehren on the Rhine," to which one or two couples were dancing, whilst the

rest looked on with the solemn faces of men who had reached that state of drunkenness when it just occurs to them to wonder whether they are sober. The doctor himself was rather the worse for liquor, as I could see. I noticed that he had turned the Madonna with the face towards the wall.

Just as I looked in, the waltz came to an end by the snapping of one of the violin-strings. The player made a few futile attempts to repair the damage, and then laid the instrument down on the table.

"The old fiddle's gone, boys," he said, "and I'm too drunk to mend it; but I'll give you a song instead. Mind you all join in the chorus."

Amidst great acclamation he began to sing, in a fine baritone, a music-hall ditty of more than usual grossness. Those who were sober enough joined in with a will at the end of each verse, and the noise was tremendous. In the midst of it came the discordant notes of the trumpet in the barrack square, sounding the tattoo. The chorus came to a sudden close.

"Bundle out now, every mother's son of you!" said the doctor. "I'm not going to have a picket coming into my rooms to fetch you. Those who are sober help those who are drunk. Out with you, now!"

I did not want to be caught in the passage, so I hastily gained my room, not waiting to see the result of these ingenious arrangements. Half an hour afterwards I heard a tap at my door, and Repton's voice asking: "Are you asleep, B.?" I made no answer, as I was utterly disgusted with the evening's proceedings. He did not come in, and I thought I heard a sigh as he turned away. Of this, however, I could not be sure.

When I returned from Fort Regent next day, I found that, as was only to be expected, there had been a very

decided "row" in my absence. Five men had been confined for drunkenness the evening before, and the case had been reported to the General, who had sent for the culprit to the district office. What took place there did not transpire; but on the morning after, on passing Repton's room, I saw a good-conduct badge nailed upon the outside of the door, with the inscription above it: "Lost, this 20th day of September, 18—," and underneath, the German words (I suppose inserted in that language as he knew none of the senior officers understood it), "Wer nicht hat von dem wird auch genommen, das er hat!" Certainly the doctor did not display much repentance.

I presume the General had given him a pretty severe reprimand, for we had no more evening parties at the castle. I heard, however, from different sources, that he had become a most popular visitor in the numerous public-houses at St. Helier's, and that himself and his fiddle were eagerly sought after by the proprietors, who found them unvarying attractions to the sailors and soldiers who frequented their dens. Other facts I heard too—of care for the sick as tender as a woman's, and of skill that was always to be had by the poor for the asking. I scarcely credited such stories till one day, when a man at Fort Regent got his arm badly crushed by the fall of a gun, and the doctor was sent for. By the time he had arrived the sufferer had been laid on a comrade's bed in the barracks, and lay there moaning with pain. Repton examined the limb and said little, but put the man under chloroform, and set the fractured bone. When it was over he called me out of the room.

"It is a bad case, B.," he said. "I fear the poor chap will lose his arm. Is there any one here who

knows anything of nursing? I do not want to move him and he will require a good deal of care."

I knew of no one, and said so.

"Well, then, I'll stop with him myself for this night, at any rate. I sha'n't be wanted at the castle, and I can look after him better than a gunner would."

He stopped with him that night, and many nights after, having obtained leave to sleep out of barracks. All that time he kept perfectly sober, and attended his patient as though he had been his dearest friend. The arm was saved in the end. The night after the sufferer was moved back to the castle, his nurse went to town, and as I heard afterwards, held a great merry-making at a tavern near the Victoria Pier, which ended in a free fight, and an arrest of most of the rioters. He himself, however, escaped through the good offices of his host, who, fearing to lose a guest who brought so much custom to his house, stowed him away in a cupboard till the police were gone. Of course this kind of thing could not be allowed to go on. The General heard of it privately, and communicated with the authorities, asking to have the doctor transferred to some other station; and the result was that Repton came into my room one morning holding in his hand a blue official envelope containing orders to hold himself in readiness to sail at once for Barbadoes.

"They think I'll be well out of the way there," said he, "and that the climate will soon finish me. I dare-say it will, but what matter? That is as good a place to die in as any other. I want you to say nothing about my orders yet awhile; the news will spread fast enough, and I have one or two friends here who will be sorry for it. I shall have to leave for Southampton about the

end of the week, I expect, and I shall get away as quietly as possible."

I was very sorry to hear the news. With all his faults and inconsistencies I had grown to like the doctor, and was grieved at the idea of losing him. Moreover, I had an uneasy feeling in my mind that I had not done as much for him as I might. I could not tell him so now, however ; it was too late for that, or for trying to repair my fault.

As he expected, he was ordered to leave on Saturday of the same week. I promised to see him off, and for that purpose went over to St. Helier's to sleep at an hotel the night previous, as the boat left before day-break. Dr. Repton was stopping at the same house, but went off in the evening to some of his old haunts, and I saw nothing of him till we met at breakfast.

It was a cold misty morning, with a strong wind blowing straight into the harbour, and the piers and the deck of the steamer looked indescribably wet and miserable in the sickly light of the lamps. There were few passengers ; nevertheless, at that early hour, I noticed a little group of people standing by the gang-way. When we drove up they surrounded the carriage, and fell upon the doctor with tears and lamentations that betrayed their Irish origin. He could scarcely free himself from them, though the whistle was sounding, and the sailors and porters were looking on with unconcealed amusement at the scene. One thinly-clad woman, standing apart from the group, and shivering in the chill sleety rain, shook hands with him again and again before she would let him go.

"Now then, sir, steamer's just off!" cried an authoritative voice on board. Repton tore himself away from his friends at last, and took my hand.

"Good-bye, B.," he said, "and God bless you! Coming from me, I don't know whether that will do you much good; but it can't do harm. I have left you something to remember me by at the castle—you wouldn't have taken it if I had offered it to you. Keep it, like a good fellow; it was an old friend of mine."

There was no more time for words. The gangway was slid in, the paddles revolved, there was a general waving of handkerchiefs and caps on the pier, and the doctor was gone.

When I got back to the fort I found his Madonna in my room. He had written my name and the date on the back, but had omitted his own. Lower down I saw an older inscription in faded ink, almost illegible. With the help of a magnifying-glass I made out the words, "Ernest Repton, from Madeline." On the face of the picture was the signature, "Madelina Linton pinxit." I never knew more than that of the doctor's history.

What has become of him since I cannot tell. I never saw any notice of his death or retirement in the papers; but his name has long since vanished from the pages of the *Army List*. I should like to think that I shall meet him again some day, but I fear the chances are against it. Perhaps, after all, it is better that I should remain in ignorance. He had noble qualities and great abilities, and I should be sorry to know as a certainty that he had wasted them to the end.

A VERY CLEVER WIFE.

Dr. and Mrs. Morton had finished tiffin, and were discussing some private theatricals, which, followed by a ball, were to take place that evening, at the mess-house of the—th. The subject was a delicate one, for on it they held decided, but unfortunately divided, opinions. The doctor had a prejudice against such things, and, though in most respects very indulgent to his pretty little wife, objected to her attending them. She, however, was bent on doing so.

“ You know, dear, that it is the very last of the season, and every one will be there.”

“ And you know my rooted objection to these entertainments, Ada ; why do you urge me ? ”

“ Then when shall I ever have an opportunity of showing off that lovely pink and silver cloak you got from Madras on my birthday ? ” pouted the young wife.

“ Ah, that is a deeply important matter ! ” laughed the doctor. “ We must see if we can’t get up a dance in our own bungalow, little woman,” continued he, somewhat inconsequently.

“ But that won’t be a ball and theatricals to-night ; and by that time Daddahbhoy, Rumanagee, and the other Parsees will have their shops filled with the new-fashioned cloak, while as yet mine is the only one in

the cantonment. I really do think, William, that you might let me go. I am sure I sit patiently enough through those solemn dinners and scientific *réunions* of which you are so fond."

"Well, well, as it is the very last of the season, I suppose I must be amiable for once; but——"

"Oh, that's a dear good disagreeable old thing!" said his wife, giving him a kiss; and without waiting to hear more, in a flutter of delight, she left the room.

When left to himself, the doctor pondered their late conversation, and felt by no means satisfied with his share in it. Still, having consented, he determined to do so with a good grace, and, on Mrs. Morton presently re-entering to look for something, he said, "By the way, dear, when shall I order the palanquin for you?"

Still continuing her search, she replied rather absently, "Oh, any time. I shall only want it returning; the Hills will call for me going."

Dr. Morton was taken aback.

"So," he exclaimed, you had arranged to go with—or without—my consent!"

With a little start, she answered somewhat confusedly, "Well, I thought you would be sure to give me leave, William, and——"

"As you have chosen to act so wholly independently," interrupted her husband, angrily, "I withdraw the consent I unwittingly gave. The house shall be closed at the usual hour, and if you do not happen to be at home at eleven o'clock *we do not sleep under the same roof this night.*" And in high displeasure Dr. Morton left the house; nor did he return for a couple of hours, during which his mood had more than once changed. The first irritation over, he felt that it was hard upon his pet to deny her the pleasure to which.. but the

moment before he had assented. How could he bear to spend the long evening opposite that disappointed, wistful little face? It began, too, to dawn upon him that “the whole cantonment”—which, in India, where private life is more distinctly public property than in any other corner of the world, stands for our esteemed old friend Mrs. Grundy—might, as has ever been its wont, put an unkind construction on motives it did not understand: might hint that he was not so much standing by his principles—which, in fact, he had yielded—as avenging his own offended dignity. The result of all which cogitation was, that if, on his return home, he should find that she had accepted both disappointment and rebuke in a proper spirit—much, indeed all, depended on that—she should go with their friends to the ball; or even, in the very probable event of their having already called, he would show his magnanimity by taking her himself. Just then a carriage drove swiftly past his; he recognised it to be the Hills’, and in it—could he credit his senses?—all radiant with smiles, wrapped in her new cloak, sat his wife, who, in merry defiance, kissed her hands to him as they passed.

Both ball and theatricals were delightful, and none enjoyed them more than the volatile and fascinating Mrs. Morton. In the gaiety of her spirits, she confided to one after another of her dearest friends her husband’s threat; and to one or two, who expressed some fear that he might carry it out, she laughingly replied that she did not think that that would be at all likely; but in the event of anything so improbable, she had still her palanquin, in which she could rest till gun-fire, when, of course, the house would be opened.

I am told that nowadays palanquins are in as little request in India as sedan-chairs in England; but in Dr. and Mrs. Morton's time—for know, O reader, that my story is founded on fact—they were, except in the evening drive, the most general mode of carriage. In the verandah of every house one or more might always be seen, with their bearers at hand, ready for instant service by day or by night.

It was past two o'clock when Dr. Morton heard, coming down the compound, the moaning monotonous cry of the bearers who carried their mistress to her home. Placing the palanquin in the verandah, they called loudly for admission, striking the door with their hands, in no small wonder that it had not, as usual, been thrown wide at their approach. Expectation of the coming triumph had driven sleep from his pillow, and he now turned his head with a grim smile, for his revenge was at hand—the little rebel should learn a lesson never to be forgotten.

To the bearers' voices was soon added that of their mistress's; indignantly, entreatingly, coaxingly she called in turn. She reminded her husband that their verandah was overlooked from the road. "Let me in, I beg, I entreat of you, William. It will be gun-fire in a couple of hours, and if seen here I shall be the laughing-stock of the whole station. O, William dear, do let me in!"

To which her husband answered sternly, "We shall not rest under the same roof this night;" and he chuckled to himself, for he only intended to keep her waiting a few minutes.

For a moment Mrs. Morton seemed irresolute then, having said a few words to the head bearer, she cried aloud, in a passionate burst of sobs, "I will

die sooner than submit to such humiliation!" and, followed by her servants, she rushed away.

There was a long wailing cry—a shriek—a heavy splash. Good Heavens! could it be—could it be possible that his impetuous wife had thrown herself into the well? Hark to those wild cries, as the bearers run hither and thither with loud exclamations and calls for help. Paralysed with fear, the husband could with difficulty open the door; then, rushing out, he would have flung himself into the still rippling water, in a mad attempt at rescue, had not a bearer hung upon his arm, as, in broken English, he tried to explain that his mistress was safe.

"Then, where is she? What is all this row about? Who has fallen in? What are you all yelling for?"

"For Mem Sahib tell, 'Throw big stone down well'; then too much bobbery make; run this way, that way—plenty great tamashâ. Mem Sahib make big cry, then Mem run away."

Doctor Morton knew himself outwitted, for doubtless his wife had taken advantage of the door she had thus succeeded in opening. Ah, well, though vexed at the trick, he was by no means sorry that the conflict was at an end, and they should both pass what remained of the night in peaceful rest.

He dismissed the bearers, and returned to the house, but to find it shut! The door was closed, and obstinately resisted all efforts to open it; while a voice from the window from which he had himself so lately spoken said, "We shall not sleep under the same roof this night." The doctor, with an uneasy laugh, first treated the situation as a silly joke, then expostulated, then stormed; but all without avail or even notice.

He called to the ayah to open the door: but her

answer was that she was locked in Mem's room, and Mem had the key under her pillow. He stamped at first with anger, but soon with cold, for his night pyjamas offered slight protection against the chill morning air. At length, seeing the palanquin, he got into it. The lovely cloak was lying on the cushions ; he drew the hood over his head, its delicate hues in striking contrast to his sunburnt face and dishevelled hair, and, dragging it round his broad shoulders with an angry tug, settled himself to sleep.

The gun had fired, the "assembly" sounded, but still the doctor slept on. Nor was he roused by the sound of horses' hoofs, as a bevy of ladies, unescorted except by servants, rode up to the door. They would be joined in their ride by their husbands after parade, and then, after a final round of the course, assemble at the house of one or other of their party to chota-hazzarie and a lively discussion of absent friends.

In much surprise they waited a minute or so before the closed and silent house ; then with significant glances, one after the other slid from her saddle determined to solve the mystery. Ah, there it is ! A little corner of the cloak worn the night before by Mrs. Morton peeped out of the closed doors of the palanquin : 'twas evident that the poor little thing had been obliged to seek that shelter. "What a shame !" They would speak to her, they would comfort her, and, oh, what a laugh they would have against her ! They grouped themselves round the palanquin, bending low to peer in ; and one on either side drew back the sliding doors as — gracious ! — Dr. Morton, still half asleep, slowly opened his eyes. Most effectually was he wakened by the startled exclamation with which the visitors hastily retreated to their horses, which they

were just in the act of mounting as the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Morton appeared in her riding-habit. They immediately rode away, to the infinite satisfaction of the recumbent but impatient doctor, who was in mortal fear that fresh complications might arise through his unexplained absence from duty bringing messages of inquiry.

At the meeting of husband and wife we would rather not play fly in the corner, but take for granted that there was the usual amount of tears, recrimination, and hysterics, in which—for this occasion only—a torn and crumpled fabric of pink and silver took an active part, the sight of it from time to time stimulating Mrs. Morton's grief and eloquence, while her husband, who, smarting under the *exposé* of the morning, had entered on the fray with unusual spirit, soon found himself vanquished, limp, and utterly dismayed, as his own inconsistent, tyrannical, and selfish conduct was contrasted—not for the first time—with the patient endurance of his long-suffering wife.

Neither of this, nor of the reconciliation that followed in natural sequence, shall we make record; but we must of the pleasing fact that, at the very next concert, Mrs. Morton, leaning on her husband's arm, appeared in most excellent spirits, her cloak, this time of amber and gold, being admired by all beholders.

AN OCEAN RACE.

“**D**O not let me hear anything about it,” said the Consul, laughing, “or I shall be obliged to notice officially such a breach of neutrality by a British subject. Despatches are about the worst kind of contraband, and—”

Here he was interrupted by Madame Delconi, who said, with a flash of her dark eyes, “I am sure you will not consider that at all if you can do my country a service. Such laws are only made for those cold hearts that can never sympathise with the wrongs of other nations.”

“And what can I say, who have put you into this dilemma? If my little vessel had not struck on the Via Mala yesterday, I should now be half way to our fleet with the instructions to the Admiral. Now her white wings are broken, and we are lost, unless an English yacht takes compassion on us. Except your little Caradoc, there is no vessel within a hundred kilometres that is fit for the voyage. It will not be the first time that we owe a debt of gratitude to her flag.”

This came from the sentimental captain, who had just lost his ship on the bar outside the harbour, partly through bad seamanship, and partly because all the lights and buoys had been taken up since the beginning of the war.

"Never mind these heroics," exclaimed the Consul impatiently to me; "if you like the job, I really don't see why you shouldn't undertake it. Of course, I won't mention it at the Foreign Office, though I don't suppose it would matter the least to you if I did. The worst that can happen to you is the loss of your yacht and, perhaps a few days' detention at Trieste or Fiume while she is before the Prize Court. But I must beg of you not to implicate me in it, or I might get recalled and sent out to one of the new vice-consulates in Asia Minor. Corali is a fool, or he would never have lost his ship in such a clear night. Why, I could have taken her in myself! I've known him a long time, and I am sure that if he would only read less poetry he would make a better seaman. I expect in a month or two to hear that he has written a poem on the shipwreck. These Italians ought not to be trusted alone on the sea."

The Consul was a man who liked every one to know that his talents were spread over a wide range. Nothing annoyed him more than the idea (which he always did his best to destroy) that he was of no use in the world but in his capacity of British consul. He was always airing his amateur knowledge of navigation, military drill, seamanship, civil engineering, and other subjects, and often inflicted a willing snub upon himself as consul. He was prouder of this superficial knowledge (which was often worse than useless to himself and his friends) than of his professional attainments, which were considerable.

After three months' yachting in the Mediterranean, I went into the Adriatic on my way home through Austria and Germany. A few days after entering Italian waters the war between Italy and Austria broke

out. I did not wish to give up my plan of reaching either Venice or Trieste in the yacht. A south-easterly gale compelled us to take shelter in Fiora, a little port north of the gulf of Manfredonia. It was hardly better than a fishing village ; but there was a safe anchorage under the lee of the headland which lay to the south of the town. The place was not so dull as it might have been under other circumstances. Many of the residents of Ancona had gone there in consequence of the war, as it was not improbable that Ancona might be bombarded by the Austrian fleet. The British consul at Leghorn had a villa at Fiora, which was for a time the centre of the society of the town.

The house was built on a rocky hill, close to the winding road to Ancona. From the terrace beyond the garden you could almost drop a stone into the tideless waters below. How often we used to sit on the benches under the oranges and myrtles, and watch the stars rising out of the sea in the east ! How often we gazed at the rich contrast of colours on the sea and the land in the morning—the white sail on the ocean, the faint blue hills in the distance, the vineyards and maize-fields ! We could hear the village girls chanting their choruses in the evening after sunset, the Ave Maria bells from the chapel in the monastery close by the seashore, and the plaintive whispering every now and then of the almost motionless ocean at our feet. Faint voices from the beach when the fishermen were bringing in their boats, the lizard rustling in the bank, the splash of the fountain, were the only sounds that broke the stillness of those summer nights. Sometimes we rowed round the point in the evening, and kept time with our oars to the songs we sang ; sometimes

we strayed in the woods till no light was left but that of the stars to guide us home.

The Consul had been an old friend of my father's, and while I was at Fiora most of my time was spent at his house; and this was an after-dinner conversation one evening on the terrace. Captain Corali commanded an *aviso* attached to the Italian fleet, which was at that time cruising off the Austrian coast. He had been sent to Fiora to fetch despatches for the admiral, but had lost his vessel in trying to enter the harbour at night. As the despatches were of great importance, and as there was no other suitable vessel within reach, he had asked me to take them over in my yacht.

Of Madame Delconi I need say but little. Our paths ran side by side for a few weeks, and then separated for ever. She was handsome, a thorough woman of the world, and an ardent patriot. No one could doubt the sincerity of her love for her country, but for the sake of Italy, she could be insincere in everything else. She would use her power over men to make them help her country in any way that lay within their reach; but when they had done what they could, and she thought they could be useful no more, then she often forgot to be grateful. Perhaps I judged her harshly; but I was younger then, and full of a boy's admiration for a beautiful woman much older than himself. Her wishes alone made me undertake what Corali had failed to do, as personally I took very little interest in, and felt no enthusiasm for, Italy in her struggle with Austria. When I had done what she asked me to do, and came back to receive what I had been looking forward to so eagerly—a few graceful words of thanks—I was bitterly disappointed. But to give her her due, I believe that her heart was

so completely taken up with the politics of Italy, that there was no place for any other feeling—every thought, moment, word, and act was wasted that was not directly devoted to her country.

It was settled that I should leave Fiora the next morning before sunrise with the despatches, as it was necessary to time our departure so as to be able to get well clear of the land before daylight, an Austrian frigate having been seen several times hovering about along the coast. In another hour, Hunt, my sailing master, had received orders to get up steam and prepare for weighing anchor an hour after midnight.

“Now you have taken such a great weight off my mind, and I can prepare for my defence before the court-martial with a light heart. If you are short-handed, I can lend you half a dozen of my poor ship-wrecked children.”

I accepted this offer of Corali’s, as I had only hands enough for ordinary cruising, and not for what would not improbably be an ocean race.

“You’ve never heard that wicked story about Corali, have you?” said the Consul, in an undertone to me (Corali was sitting some way off talking to Madame Delconi). “I heard it at the Casino. He was once, they say, sent out to Malta in a despatch boat. He was absent ten days or a fortnight; everybody began to fear that he had been lost, when he suddenly reappeared at Spezzia, and reported that there was no such island as Malta to be found.”

Corali then joined us, and I took his place by Madame Delconi.

“And I,” she said, “will give you a letter of introduction to my cousin, the Admiral, and will command him to express my gratitude to you. He will welcome

you indeed ; but he and I and Italy will be almost jealous of the debt we owe to one who is not a countryman of ours. Ah me, if I could only make you an Italian ! ”

“ I will become one if you will only ask me.”

“ No, I will not ask you yet ; I must first see what you can do for Italy. Perhaps soon I may take you at your word.”

The silence which followed was broken by the Consul, whose voice seemed to bring back her thoughts from where they had been roaming. She was gazing pensively at a little boat a mile or two out, but appeared hardly to see it ; I could just hear a gentle sigh as she turned her face from it.

“ If you like, I will pilot you out of the harbour tomorrow morning. I know the way out as well as that path through the woods. The only thing is whether it would be consistent with my official position. The office has just sent me orders to make a report on the war ; I detest reports, and never could write a decent one, so it will be a comfort to me to turn my hand to something that I feel capable of doing, before exposing myself in a meagre report on the war which never interested me.”

Everybody smiled at this characteristic speech from the Consul.

I felt bound to refuse this embarrassing offer, and said,

“ I won’t run the risk of compromising you. Hunt^{*} has been sounding the passage, and he feels pretty sure of getting over safely. And Captain Corali tells me that the leading lights on the Mole will be lit for me, so I think we can manage it alone.”

“ Well, well, do as you like ; though I may say that no one knows the course out better than I do.”

But next time he took his own yacht out, he lost her on the rocks in calm weather; while his report, which he felt so incapable of making, was spoken of in Parliament as "the lucid and exhaustive account of the causes and events of the war, written by our energetic Consul at Leghorn."

So the letters were given to me by Corali. I was young enough to be enchanted with such a romantic adventure. A handsome woman had sent me on an errand that might end in the capture of the yacht by an Austrian cruiser, and possibly in imprisonment for myself. But whatever might happen, I felt sure of a sufficient reward in the kind thoughts that she would feel for her boy-admirer, who had done what she wished him to do. I pictured her to myself resting under the orange-trees next day, and perhaps bestowing a thought or a sigh on me, who might at that moment be the target for a frigate's broadside. I felt that I was going to bring back the old days of chivalry and knight-errantry. I was only just twenty, and what would that age be without such pleasant empty little romances?

Then they drank my health in the sweet wines of Cyprus and Corinth, and wished me *bon voyage*. I had a few words alone with Madame Delconi, and begged for a little Indian charm she had been playing with, and which she said would protect whoever had it from all harm. She gave it me saying,

"I do not give it you I only lend it; you must bring it back to me when you can. And now," she added, in a lower tone, "what can I do to show my gratitude for what you are going to do for Italy? Will you give me some little task—I will try so hard to do it well while you are in peril for our sakes?"

I almost asked for the flower in her hand; but even

while the words were on my lips, a good angel put it into my heart to remember poor Morris, one of the yacht's crew, who had fallen from the rigging and broken his thigh. He was now in the hospital at Ancona. That very morning I had a letter from him ; he said that they were all very kind to him, but that "I harnt herd a Blessed word of inglisch Sins yer ronnor left"—he who was the life of the forecastle and the spinner of endless yarns over his grog. I told her his story, and an expression of interest came over her beautiful features.

"If only you would go and see him once or twice when you are in Ancona, and speak to him in his own language, I am sure that he will be so grateful to you. I do not wish to pay you an idle compliment ; but I know how little I should care for any pain if you came to say a kind word to me now and then."

"Oh, I shall be so glad to go and see him whenever I am in Ancona ! What is his name ? I suppose he is in that hospital at the corner of the Piazza. I know it well ; I have been to see some of our wounded soldiers there. Probably I shall be going over there to-morrow. Must you go now ? I will only say *au revoir*, as I hope to see you again in a week or two." A bright smile, and she was gone. A petal from the rose in her hair had fallen to the ground ; but as I stooped to pick it up, a sudden gust of wind carried it away from me.

After saying farewell to the others, I went down the hill, and found the boat from the yacht waiting for me on the beach. The moon was about to set ; the sky overhead was clear and bright with stars. Along the horizon to the south there lay a thick bank of clouds, occasionally illumined by a flash of lightning, followed by

a low growl of distant thunder. The sea was perfectly calm ; the images of the stars in the water hardly quivered, except where our oars had raised the ripples.

The Caradoc in her day had been one of the fastest schooners of her tonnage. I bought her at the end of the season, and had her lengthened during the winter, to make room for an engine and auxiliary screw, without decreasing her accommodation. Under steam and sail, she had often gone over fourteen knots an hour ; so with a fair wind she might expect to run away from any ordinary Austrian frigate. Hunt had stowed away her cruising-sails, and had substituted her old racing-suit, which had often borne her in first past the mark-boat at Ryde. Soon after midnight steam was blowing away from the waste-pipe, and one of the engineers came and reported to me on the bridge, "All ready below, sir." Another five minutes and we were steaming slowly out to sea. Meantime, the clouds had covered almost all the sky ; the wind was whistling through the rigging, and a long rolling swell from the south-east had sprung up. In a few minutes we had got outside the point that sheltered the harbour, and had shaped our course for the rendezvous of the fleet on the Austrian coast about one hundred and fifty miles off. Very soon the lights were extinguished, and we lost sight of the outline of the coast in the darkness. We put as much sail on the yacht as she could bear, and drove the engines at full speed—the throb of them sounded like the beating of the Caradoc's heart. We got about twelve knots out of her for the first two or three hours ; but as the sea rose her speed decreased. Hunt was at the wheel, and there was a look-out on the forecastle and on each side of the bridge. The smallest member of the crew

—Muz, the fox-terrier—was on his mat on the lee-side of the funnel-casing. He had come out to the Mediterranean with me while a mere puppy, and arrived in Ancona a dog without a name. There he chased and almost killed the first cat he saw. A gendarme came up, arrested him, muttered something that sounded like *cane feroce*, and took him to the town-hall. In the end he was sentenced to wear a muzzle—a badge of infamy which had hitherto made him look down upon all dogs whom he had met abroad. For two days he tried to scratch it off with his forepaws, and by rubbing his nose against the stones; but eventually had to succumb to *force majeure*. Then he received the name of Muz, and never left the yacht unless he was made to.

About an hour after leaving Fiora a sail was reported close ahead. “Hard a-port! Ease off the jib and forestaysail sheets!” The Carodoc swung round, and a little fishing-boat, that in the dim light had looked almost large enough to be an Austrian frigate, passed close under our lee-quarter. The Italian sailors, lent by Corali, said that there was not much chance of our meeting the enemy so far from land. The glorious excitement of that night and of the day that followed! There was nothing that could be compared to the command of a fast schooner in half a gale of wind! A quick eye, a steady hand on the helm, and we could make all the winds and the waves obey us.

Morning came, and with it more wind and a heavier sea, which made the yacht stagger so that I had the topsails lowered, and a single reef taken-in in the foresail and mainsail.

“Well, Hunt, what do you think about it? Do

you think we can run away from one of their cruisers?"

"Don't know at all, sir," said he, with a dubious shake of the head. He had a great prejudice against steam. "These here steamers carry such a terrible weather-helm. We'd better ease off the mainsheet a little, sir; I can't keep her on her course without jamming the helm hard up. I don't mean no offence to you or the yacht, sir; but I shouldn't like to find myself under the lee of a frigate just now."

"Well, Hunt, we must do what we can."

As I went away from him, I heard him muttering, "Ah, she were a beauty!" meaning, I suppose, the Caradoc before her conversion. Finally, he relieved his feelings by ordering the look-out on the bridge to keep his eyes wider open, in forcible language.

Soon after sunrise a dense driving mist surrounded the yacht, which made everything invisible beyond a radius of a quarter of a mile. One of the men reported about an hour afterwards that he heard a ship's bell close by; but as nothing could be seen, I thought that it must have been the cry of a sea-bird or the wind. In another half-hour we had emerged from the fog, and out of it appeared about a mile off the Austrian frigate Opal under easy sail! We must have passed very close to her in the mist, and, judging from the course she was now steering, we had probably been running along side of her for some distance. Hunt was equal to the occasion. Coming up to the bridge, he merely said, "Strange sail right abeam, sir;" and returned to the wheel without a word.

Some minutes elapsed before she showed any signs of having seen us, which gave us time to shake out the reefs and to put the yacht on her best sailing

course, with the wind about two points abaft the beam. This brought the frigate right astern. Suddenly she seemed to wake up ; the men crowded into the rigging, her helm was put up, and a blank cartridge was fired to make us heave-to. By this time we had increased our lead considerably. The frigate yawed to fire a shell at us ; but it burst some distance astern. We settled down for the race. I could hardly hope that we should win it ; the sea was so high that the yacht had much more water to go through than her opponent, who, being ten times her size, did not rise and fall with each wave.

How exciting the first hour of the chase was ! The distance between us did not seem to diminish, but we had more sails set than the masts ought to carry in such a high wind. Under steam alone we should have had no chance. Sometimes as we lay in the trough of a sea the frigate was completely hidden from us. The lee rail was close down to the water's edge, and the men, except those at the helm and the sheets, had to crouch down under the shelter of the weather bulwarks. Clouds of spray were driven over us by the screw racing when the stern was out of water.

Hunt and I were on the bridge watching the frigate through our glasses. She did not seem to bear her press of sail as well as we did, but was rolling heavily ; nor did she gain much on us, but probably her steam was very low when she sighted us.

“ This is very like an ocean race from the Needles to Cherbourg, Hunt, only rather more exciting.”

“ We don't get no allowance for tonnage, I am afraid, sir.”

By midday the frigate had gained upon us and was now less than a mile away. We all began to feel that

most likely before sunset we should be prisoners on board the frigate, the Caradoc stolen from us, and either in the hands of a prize crew, or a blazing wreck that would light up the dark waters at midnight.

Suddenly another friendly storm of rain hid us for more than half an hour. We had been driven considerably out of our course by the frigate, so I took the opportunity of putting the Caradoc nearly close hauled on the port tack, which I had been unable to do on first sighting the frigate as she was abeam. This would give us a better chance of escape, as a fore-and-aft-rigged vessel would sail nearer to the wind than a square-rigged one. The success of this manœuvre depended mainly on the length of time we remained out of sight, and on the frigate not changing her course. When at last it cleared up, she was a mile to leeward of us sailing straight away. Hunt was quite pleased. The sea had calmed down a little now, and as soon as the frigate had round-to (which she did very clumsily) she fired her starboard broadside at us. Most of the shots fell wide, but one came through the rigging and made a hole in the foresail.

This was more than Muz could stand. Jumping down from his mat, he got on to a coil of rope under the bulwarks, and with his fore paws on the lee rail and his head just peering above it, he barked furiously at the frigate. When he found that he could do no good by barking into space, he returned to his mat sulkily, growling all the time.

For the rest of the day we kept our distance, and it seemed likely that we should escape, unless some mishap occurred to us. But about three the yachts jibboom broke off, and we fell gradually into the clutches of the frigate. All was almost lost, when *her*

fore topgallant mast was carried away, dragging down with it three sails. We were saved. I immediately ran up the courteous signal in the International Code, "Farewell, a pleasant voyage." This insulting message she answered with a broadside, which did us no harm. She hove-to to repair the wreck, and gradually sank lower and lower on the horizon, and was out of sight at sunset. Some time afterwards I heard that the fallen rigging had fouled her screw, which accounted for our getting away so easily after the accident.

We sighted the Italian fleet at daylight next morning, and in an hour were at anchor between the two divisions. A boat was sent off to the flagship with the despatches, and at noon the Admiral himself paid me a visit on board the Caradoc. I stayed three days with the fleet. Their hospitality was unbounded, and the enthusiasm with which they received us was most gratifying. The petty officers gave a grand supper to my men, while I was hardly able to spend another hour on board the Caradoc. To have successfully completed such a romantic adventure seemed to me the height of good fortune; the only thing wanting was the kind word that I felt sure of getting from Madame Delconi when I returned to Fiora.

Never again shall I feel the pride with which I sailed through the fleet on our way back to Italy. The band of each ship played the English National Anthem, and saluted our flag hoisted at each foremast. We reached Ancona two days afterwards. I went over to see the Consul at Fiora. Madame Delconi was not there, and they had told me that she had gone back to Ancona. Next day I saw her on the Piazza, talking eagerly to an Italian deputy. She bowed slightly, with the air of one who could not remember who it was she was

bowing to, and walked away under the trees ; I had quite passed away from her memory.

Then I went up to the hospital to ask after poor Morris. To my great grief I heard that he had died two days before. I asked if anybody had been to see him ever, but was told that no one except a priest had been near him. Madame Delconi had forgotten her promise, so eagerly given. When a little sympathy, a few pleasant words, a smile, a handful of flowers, would have done him more good than any number of physicians, she had left him to die alone, unknown, and uncared for ; with no one near him who could speak to him in his own language, or hear his last words, or take his last messages. A seaman who had always done his duty, he died far away from his home, far away from the voice of his widowed mother, in the midst of strangers, who only regarded him as an interesting case in surgery.

Next day I left Ancona, and reached England early in the autumn.

ON BOARD THE ILIONE.

A TALE OF LOVE'S SACRIFICE.

CHAPTER I.

PLAYTIME.

THEY say that a man-of-war is coming here for the summer. Sir Henry told me that the Arabs are getting troublesome again, and that the Government is going to send a ship to look after them. I do hope it is true! One does get so tired of the same eternal round of dulness. Nothing to look forward to from month to month but a dinner at the French Consul's, or a picnic on the island, where one always meets the same men, and knows by instinct exactly what they will say upon any given subject. And if a man-of-war comes the officers will be sure to give some dances on board; and then their band can come and play to us on shore in the evening—at least there will be something to look forward to, even if after all it doesn't come up to our expectations. I wonder whether anything ever does come up to one's expectations? It is such a bore to get excited about anything in this hot climate, but I feel almost as if I could. I haven't seen you for an age, Alice; you have been as invisible lately as an eclipse at Greenwich. Have you

heard anything about it? Tell me all the news you have heard since I saw you last."

"Kenrick Stuart told me this morning that the Ilione would be here in a month. I think that was the name. I don't think he quite likes the idea of other men coming here, Irenè."

"O, I am so glad—I mean about the Ilione. I know Captain Vivian, who commands her; we met him often when we were last in England. As for Kenrick, it will do him good to be a little jealous. He does bore me sometimes. Of course he is very faithful and devoted, but a spaniel would be that."

"Poor Kenrick, I think you are very hard on him! He spent the whole of yesterday looking for the paint-box you lost."

"Yes, he certainly is very useful," Irenè acknowledged; and soon the conversation drifted into the absorbing subject of dress.

Irenè was the only daughter of Sir Henry Henderson, the govenor of a small colony in the Indian seas, called Zibar. It consisted of a town and two or three hundred square miles of the adjoining territory, where all the beauty of tropical vegetation was found. The heat, though overpowering for many hours of the day, was tempered by the delicious sea-breeze in the evening. Just in front of the town, and making a natural breakwater for it, was a little island hardly half a mile in length. In the sound between it and the mainland many a kind of vessel could be seen at anchor, from the ocean mail-steamer to the picturesque Arab dhow.

The Ilione, a small corvette, came out from England late one autumn and joined the flagship at Bombay. The winter months were passed in fleet evolutions and

steam tactics, and in the spring some of the smaller vessels of the squadron were sent away to the outlying stations of the command. On board the *Ilione* betting ran high as to her destination. The Persian Gulf—that frying-pan of Asia—was the favourite, but only in the sense of standing highest in the betting; while no one dared even to hope that the *Ilione* would be sent to Zibar.

At last the orders came. One of the gunboats which had been laid down by the mile during the Crimean war, and cut off into lengths as required, was sent to the Persian Gulf, and the *Ilione* to Zibar. Every one was delighted, except a navigating sub-lieutenant, who had put a lot of money on the Persian Gulf, and whom heat affected as little as it did a salamander.

“Bompas will be melancholy for a month,” said Hutton to Graves, when he relieved him on the bridge at midnight, and had read the night orders; “and I believe that nothing less than the prospect of a general European war would console him for the loss of his money. He is cleaning his sextant in the gunroom now, which he always does when there is anything on his mind.”

“I suggested that he should try and get an exchange into the *Mermaid*, as he seemed so anxious to go to the Persian Gulf, which made him furious. Well, I think I shall turn in. I don’t envy your watch. It’s a nasty night.”

“Beastly. It’s all very well for sentimental young women to sing of ‘standing on the bridge at midnight,’ but when that bridge is the bridge of a crank man-of-war, and you can’t see further than the jibboom, and you get drenched with spray every

two minutes, the position is, to say the least of it, a disagreeable one," growled Hutton, as Graves went away.

Vivian, who commanded the Ilione, entered the service just before the Crimean war. Never was so mad a midshipman. One winter at Malta the harbour was reported to be haunted. In the dark hours of the night a spectral boat with a dim lantern and a ghostly figure plying the oars would come alongside the ships at anchor, and challenge the sentry at the gangway in a wailing voice. Boats might be lowered in pursuit, but the phantom bark was not caught. Dockyard officials talked nervously about Russian spies sounding the entrance, and the Admiral Superintendent was furious whenever the subject was mentioned. The marines, who believe anything you choose to tell them, were of opinion that the boat was manned by the ghost of one of the Knights of Malta, who had lost his armour overboard when he reached Valetta from Rhodes. At last, however, a rationalistic petty officer laid an ambush, and the boat was caught, but not the crew. The crew jumped overboard with a halo of phosphorescent light around him, and was lost in the night. Soon Vivian was ordered to the Black Sea, and the unquiet spirit was seen no more among the ships at night. A day or two after Vivian's departure the captain of one of the smartest frigates on the station received an order, purporting to come from the admiral, to get up steam immediately and go to the coast of Sicily to search for a sea-serpent which three fishermen said they had seen there.

Vivian was next heard of at the seat of war. One morning, when his ship was blockading Odessa, he was reported absent from morning quarters. Before the

dawn he had slipped down the side into a boat, and having armed himself with a revolver and a cutlass, rowed away to a sandy spit beyond the town to invade Russia. Hauling up his boat, he waited till the gray morning came. It came at 6. 30 A. M., and with it a solitary Cossack. The Cossack stared, and Vivian executed a strategic movement and surrounded him. With his revolver in one hand and his cutlass in the other, he forced that Cossack to surrender, and took him, bound as to his hands, to the boat. The lieutenant of the watch, whose life Vivian's pranks had often made a burden to him, was beginning to congratulate himself inwardly on having seen the last of him, when a boat hailed the ship. Another minute, and Vivian and a hulking Cossack, twice his size, and his prisoner of war, were standing on the quarter-deck. The Cossack was sent to the naval prison at Lewes, and Vivian to a more airy situation at the masthead, for being absent without leave.

Soon afterwards his ship formed one of the fleet bombarding Sebastopol. The bombardment rather bored him after a time, and he yearned for something more exciting. So he made a bet with another midshipman that he would swim to the flagship and back, a distance of over a mile. With shot and shell playing about his head, and often nearly drowning him with spray when they struck the water near him, he went on and on till he reached the flagship, the smoke of whose guns hid him from sight. Then he took out of his mouth a rusty nail which he had brought for the purpose, and scratched his name on the copper sheathing just above the water-line at the bows. Thus having presented his autograph to the admiral, he returned to his own ship. This adventure nearly ended

his naval career ; the authorities declared that he had deserted his ship in action. But his own captain had once been a boy himself, and was able, though not without great difficulty, to get this last offence over-looked.

With increasing years Vivian cooled down a little, and at last found himself a commander, and in charge of H.M.S. Ilione on the Indian station. While undergoing a course of gunnery in the Excellent he had met Irenè Henderson, and soon he had vague ideas of leaving the service and settling down with Irenè and love in a cottage. But she had no intention of allowing her charms to be wasted upon a half-pay commander who had no house in London ; so after flirting with him for a long time she began to snub him, refused to wear the flowers he sent her, and ostentatiously showed her preference for Kenrick Stuart, her father's private secretary, and the probable heir to a rich old aunt with a house in Eaton Square. Her father was then at home on leave, in the interval between two colonial appointments. Irene did not appreciate England, where, comparatively speaking, she was nobody ; while in a colony, where her father was governor, she was supreme. And his success was due in a great measure to her. The colonials liked to be ruled over by that wonderfully beautiful woman, who, though she was said to have no heart, could be gracious to everybody. She held drawing-rooms, and gave herself, until a hint from home restrained her, some airs of sovereignty which did not ill become her. That she had consummate tact was proved by her universal popularity, even with her own sex. She looked forward to a time, which she hoped would really come, when she would hold nearly as high a position in English society as she did now in colonial society.

One morning in the middle of March, the look-out at the mast-head of the Ilione hailed the deck, and announced that the conical hill behind the city of Zibar was in sight, two points away on the starboard bow ; and before long it could be seen by the officer of the watch on the bridge. Next the lighthouse on the island was sighted. Bompas was busy taking cross-bearings to determine the ship's exact position on the chart. The leadsmen in the chains reported that the water was gradually shoaling. The monotonous chant of "By the mark ten" was quickly followed by "By the deep nine." The engines were stopped, and the Ilione hoisted a signal for a pilot to take her up to her anchorage in the sound. Quarantine officers came on board, the Governor was saluted, and before noon she was moored opposite the town, looking as if she had been there for weeks.

In the afternoon Vivian and Graves went on shore to call on Sir Henry Henderson, who received them with that urbane suavity for which he was celebrated. Irenè was not at home. Till his arrival that morning Vivian had not known that the Hendersons were at Zibar. They met two days afterwards ; her carriage was passing the landing-stage as he came ashore. She stopped immediately, and said :

"Fancy our meeting again in this part of the world ! Are you going to see Sir Henry ? If so, I can take you ; I am going home now."

Vivian hesitated a little, remembering all the wise resolutions he had been making for the last forty-eight hours to see Irenè as little as possible ; but she went on :

"*You must come ; you know I am supreme here and I order you ! Besides, my father was only saying*

at luncheon to-day that he wanted to see you, about that Arab business, I suppose."

The wise resolutions were broken on the spot, after weak man's customary manner, and Vivian once more found himself by Irenè's side. Sir Henry was out, so she did the honours of Government House.

"Our garden is what we are most proud of out here. Come and see it."

Leading the way down a flight of marble steps, she brought him to a paradise of flowers that are only seen in the tropics.

"I hope you have got plenty of news for us. We don't often meet a recent arrival from the civilised world."

"And what do you call the civilised world? If I can judge from this garden and your boudoir, I should call this the very centre of it."

"O, that is what I call portable civilisation; one can have that almost anywhere one goes to and therefore I suppose we don't appreciate it enough. It is so pleasant to have some fresh people to talk to, instead of these sun-dried subjects of mine."

"Are you very despotic to your subjects, Queen Irenè?"

"Yes, very, when they bore me, as they generally do, It is too hot to stay out here. Come in and I will give you some tea—or some brandy-and-soda, if you like that better. Papa will be in soon. There, if you sit in that window you can see your Ilione. How I should like to have been a sailor, and to have captured a Cossack, as you did!"

"Don't remind me of my boyish extravagances, please. I think you would soon get tired of a sailor's life."

“Why, have you got tired of the life?”

“No, I have not; but then most men do after fifteen years at sea. There is Graves, for instance, my first lieutenant; there is not a better officer in the service; but yet he is always abusing it.”

“And yet you once thought of leaving it—at least, so I was told.”

“That was in those pleasant days at Ryde, before you—”

He stopped suddenly, and after a moment’s silence went on :

“Have you forgotten those pleasant days there?” Irenè answered by another question. “Do not you think that it is much better to try and forget all pleasant days that are past and gone, for then we are not so likely to be discontented with the present? What nonsense I am talking! Really this climate is not suited for philosophical discussion. There is a *levée* here to-morrow; of course you will come to it?”

“I shall be most happy.”

“And I want you to give me the names of all your officers. Now that you are here I will make Sir Henry give some dinner-parties; and you can bring some of them to-morrow.”

Here Sir Henry came in, and Kenrick Stuart, much to Vivian’s astonishment, as Irenè had not mentioned his name, and he had no idea that he was in Zibar. Somehow Irenè seemed uneasy, and Vivian went away with a host of bewildering thoughts in his mind.

The Ilione had been sent to Zibar because a piratical attack had been made on a small vessel flying the British flag about a hundred miles down the coast by an Arab dhow. The creeks and inlets which indented the shore gave the Arabs many opportunities

of concealing themselves and pouncing out suddenly upon any defenceless ship that passed. They were traders when they could, and pirates when they dared. Either character could be assumed or abandoned at a moment's notice. A man-of-war appeared, and the dhow was only carrying a cargo of palm-oil on behalf of the white merchants of Bombay. If a short-handed schooner was seen next day on the horizon, every man on board the dhow was soon armed to the teeth, and the palm-oil was used to lubricate the locks of their muskets. It was not supposed that there was more than one dhow that had actually committed piracy, which had been almost unknown for years ; but unless it was quickly put a stop to, her example might prove contagious. The Ilione went away for a week's cruise along the coast. She found two or three dhows in a creek, which were destroyed, as arms were found on board, and the Arabs were not able to give a satisfactory account of themselves ; and another was captured by the Ilione's boats. The owner declared that the dhow which had attacked the vessel two months before had escaped to the north, by the help of the Prophet, and the Ilione returned from her mission of protecting the weak against the strong.

“Who is on the Government House roster to-morrow night ?” said Graves one evening at the smoking-tub.

“Andrewes and I,” said Bompas, whom Irene’s smiles had helped to forget his loss in the matter of the Persian Gulf.

“Bompas, I think Henderson must have designs upon you. You’re always there ! How glad you must be that we weren’t sent to the Persian Gulf ! And I wonder what the Yankee at Colombo who seemed so

fond of you would say to it—I mean Miss Venus Croggs?"

While the Ilione was in harbour invitations came regularly twice a week to two officers to dine at Government House, and always in the order of their rank; so that the Government House roster became quite a joke on board.

"I'm sure I'm not there more than you are. Besides Miss Henderson is disposed of. They say she is engaged to that fellow Stuart who dined with us the other day."

"Try and cut him out, then, Bompas. But seriously, I wonder whether Vivian knows it?"

"I don't think he does. Now he, if you like, Graves, is always up there."

"I think something is up," said Andrewes, meditatively.

"O, Andrewes, what a detective was lost when you entered the service! How improving it is to see a master mind drawing conclusions!" answered to him his tormentor Hutton, laughing.

"And yet," said Graves, "I don't think I have ever once seen her and Stuart together, while Vivian is a sort of naval aide-de-camp to her. The other day she made him send the pinnace with a drift-net to the back of the island to catch fish for her aquarium, and she is always ordering him about. I believe that she keeps Stuart rather in the background; but that nevertheless he is meant after all to win the Henderson Plate."

"Well, women *are* cautions," declared Andrewes.

"Bravo, Andrewes!" said Hutton; "you will be a wise man some day if you practise two or three hours regularly every day."

I was determined to ask Vivian's permission to give a dance on board the Ilione to Irenè Henderson and whatever there was of beauty and fashion in Zibar.

CHAPTER II.

WORK.

"**I**DON'T think I ever before enjoyed anything so much as your ball the other day," Irenè said to Vivian one afternoon. "You sailors always manage everything so well. The decorations were perfect."

"I only wish we had as many opportunities of giving balls as our brethren in the army."

"I hate military balls. Half the men look as if they were in danger of being bored to death, and as if they were conferring the greatest favour possible when they ask you to dance; whereas with sailors it is just the other way—they dance as if it were a pleasure that could only come once in a lifetime."

On the night of the dance, when Sir Henry and Irenè reached the landing-stage they found a line of seamen in full dress drawn up on each side of the flight of steps. At the bottom was Vivian, waiting to conduct them to the place of honour in the stern of the barge. A dozen strokes of the oar brought them to the *Iline*, and when they stepped upon the deck a guard of honour of marines received them with presented arms. Sir Henry and the French Consul's ugly wife, and Vivian and Irenè opened the ball. Irenè had been doubtful whether she would be received with sufficient ceremony; but Vivian showed that he knew what was due to her, and the semi-royal honours that had been given to her (and to her father also, she added to her-

self in her thoughts—in a parenthesis) were like incense to her soul. Never had she looked more lovely. The indifferent looks of the wives and daughters of Zibar served to throw her beauty into stronger relief. And if only she could have had an escort of Light Cavalry to ride beside her carriage between Government House and the landing-stage the cup of her happiness would have overflowed. But, alas, there was no Light Cavalry nearer than Poonah.

“The Iline has been like an oasis in the desert to us ; I hope you will not have to leave us soon,” Irenè went on to say.

“I have orders to join the flag at Bombay in six weeks.”

“And then we shall have to settle down into the old groove of dulness again.”

“We are going for a week’s cruise to the north along the coast in a few days. I wonder whether you and Sir Henry would be our guests and come with us ? Your subjects will take great care of you, Queen Irenè.”

“O, that would be too delightful ! How I should enjoy it ! I was going to ask you to take us for a sail some afternoon, but this will be ever so much better. You must wait till papa comes in. I am almost sure he will say yes. He hasn’t been very well lately, so a little sea air will do him good. I hope we sha’n’t meet any of those dreadful Arab dhows. I was beginning to feel dull again, now that that delightful ball is over, but you have quite cheered me up. Here Sir Henry came in, and Irenè rushed up to him, exclaiming, “O, papa, Captain Vivian wants us to go with him in the Iline for a short cruise ; do you say yes. I shall enjoy it so much.”

"I have not a moment to spare, my dear ; I have got to attend a council immediately ; but if Captain Vivian will stay and dine with us, we will talk over his kind offer then. I only came in to get a book."

"But you will say yes ?"

"Well, I will think about it," said Sir Henry, rushing out of the room.

"It is all right, I think ; papa never gives a decisive answer, but I am sure he likes the idea. Now tell me all about it."

"Well, I will put myself and the ship under your orders. You shall take your piano on board if you like ; there is room for it in my cabin, which you will have. I will send a boat for it to-morrow. And then you can give us some music in the evening ; Hutton will be charmed to have somebody to accompany his violin. And whenever you want to go on shore or for a sail when we are at anchor, all the ship's boats and steam launches shall be at your disposal. An officer shall be told off every day to attend to your wants, and we will do everything we can think of to do honour to the Queen of Zibar !"

"What a tempting picture ! How dreadful it would be if, after all, Sir Henry cannot go ! We must do all we can at dinner to-night to persuade him."

But Sir Henry required no persuading, and was glad to get a little rest from the toil of ruling in the tropics which Vivian's offer would give him. So Irenè, the child of excitement, was happy again.

A week afterwards the Ilione left Zibar with Sir Henry Henderson and Irenè on board. As she steamed out to sea, Irenè stood on the bridge with Vivian and the officer of the watch, and persuaded them to let her work the engine-room telegraph under their direction.

Then noon came, and she wanted to be shown how to take meridian attitudes on the sextant. Gunnery was the next thing of this wilful beauty; so she made Vivian have one of the guns loaded with shot, and fired it herself. The Ilione was rolling at the time, and as she pulled the lanyard when the ship's side was depressed, the shot struck the water only a few yards off and raised an enormous column of spray; which, as Irenè had chosen to fire one of the weather guns, the wind blew back on to the deck, deluging her and everybody.

She sang to them in the evening; and what with her piano, Hutton's fiddle, and Bompas's flute, there was quite an orchestra on board. Sir Henry, too, enjoyed himself thoroughly, and seemed relieved at being away from official life, deputations, and his private secretary. It was quite a novelty to him to be cool at eleven o'clock in the morning, and to be sitting at that time in an easy-chair under an awning smoking a cigar, with a pleasant sea-breeze instead of a punkah.

Scene—the deck of the Ilione. Time—evening, with the moon shining brightly; just when men always make such fools of themselves. *Dramatis personæ*—Vivian, a sea-captain; Irenè, daughter to the Governor of Zibar.

“Irenè, you will not send me away from you again? I never thought when I left Ryde that I should see you again so soon. One kind word from you now would make me forget the pain which your unkind words then gave me.”

“I am sorry if I said anything unkind to you. But it cannot make any difference now. Do you not

know," she went on rather nervously, "that I am going to marry Mr. Stuart? O, Harry, Harry, I have behaved most wickedly to you, I have deceived you in everything, and have given you false hopes that can never be fulfilled. But, Harry, I could not be a poor man's wife. I cannot do without riches and what they can buy. I should have made you miserable. I am worldly and selfish. But yet—believe it if you can—I had some thought for you. I pictured you to myself as my husband, loving me with all your heart, trying to make me happy, as I know you would have done. And in return I should have given you nothing. I did not love you; I only liked you very much. I should have been miserable, and you still more. I am not worthy of the love you would have wasted on me, and the care you would have bestowed on me. I am all that my enemies say of me—cold, heartless, and mercenary. But I shrank from giving a base return for your devotion, such as I feel sure I should have given if I had consented to marry you. Your grief then would have been far greater than it is now. Your idol would soon have been cast down from its pedestal. Yes, Harry, I am sure it would. I can look upon these things more calmly than you can just now. And when you came out here, it was so pleasant after my monotonous life to see old friends from home again. Have you never felt the irksomeness of life, when each day is exactly like those which went before it and those which come after it? I thought, of course, you would hear that I was going to marry Kenrick Stuart, so I said nothing to you myself about it. I was a coward and feared to tell you lest it might end our pleasant friendship. I did very wrong, and tried to shelter myself by saying that of course you knew it all the

time. I cannot ask you to forgive me ; I will only ask you not to hate me, as I deserve to be hated."

"I tried to hate you once, Irenè, and to magnify in my own eyes everything that I could think of against you ; I tried to judge you dispassionately, but I found that it was a horrible thing to try to do ; it seemed like sacrilege to me. So I cannot hate you, Irenè, even after what you have told me. I never heard that you were engaged to Stuart. I will be loyal to you to the last, and of nothing that you have done will I complain. If you think that I have anything to forgive, I will say I forgive you, Irenè."

Here Vivian was called away by Bompas, who told him that the ship's course ought to be altered soon to avoid a sandbank with only four fathoms of water over it.

Thus Irenè wrote the epitaph of Vivian's romance. If only boyhood, he thought, could come back again to him—reckless happy boyhood, whose life is without a care and whose sky without a cloud; free untrammelled boyhood, when we think about the beautiful things that are before us in the world, and wonder what they will be like, and how we shall be sure to find them all ! Happy boy ! he can see himself in after life, with everything attained that ambition suggested, and everything found that he was going to seek ! Who does not long to be able to hope all his boyish hopes again ?

Next day Irenè and Sir Henry went out in the steam pinnace for a cruise along the coast, while the Ilione was taking soundings at the mouth of a river which entered the sea sixty miles north of Zibar. Hutton took charge of their boat. They started early in the morning, and went ashore for a few hours in the middle

of the day to get shelter from the heat in the woods, that came down almost to the water's edge. As the afternoon drew on they embarked again ; and when Irenè was tired of playing with the bright flowers she had picked, Hutton had to explain to her the principle of the steam engine.

Vivian and the Ilione finished the survey of the river's mouth soon after midday ; and then he took the launch and steamed along the coast to join the other boat, which he found in a creek about ten miles away. A sudden fancy, for which he could not account, had made him follow Irenè. In little more than an hour the sun would set, so it was necessary for the boats to return, that they might reach the Ilione before the end of the short twilight of the tropics. A pleasant breeze had sprung up off the land late in the afternoon, and a long swell was coming in from the south ; but the crests of the waves were so far apart as to render it hardly perceptible. Vivian led the way, Irenè's boat being about a hundred yards astern. The creek was a mile long. The entrance to it could not be seen from the other end, as the mouth curved round to the south. They reached the open sea, and there, just in front of them, like a cat waiting for a mouse, was the piratical dhow which everybody thought had been destroyed or wrecked. Vivian recognised her at once by her rig, which had been described to him. She changed her course to cut off the boats, and there could be no doubt of her hostility, as men could be seen on deck hurrying about with swords and muskets. Vivian's only thought was for Irenè's safety. Escape for the boats was impossible, unless the dhow were disabled, as she held a passage between a headland and a reef, through which they must pass to reach the open sea. Vivian

saw through his glass that she was not steered by a tiller, but by pendants hanging over the stern. If these could be cut she would become unmanageable, and unable for a time at least to pursue the boats, the crews of which were not numerous enough to attack her with any chance of success. The Ilione was out of sight, ten miles away. Vivian thought for a moment or two, and, calling Hutton to come up alongside, gave him a note, in which he had written a few words to Graves while the boats were together. He had determined to go alone and try to cut the dhow's rudder pendants, so that if he failed Hutton might have as many men as possible to resist attack. If he lost one boat's crew in trying to disable the dhow, the other with Irenè and Sir Henry in it would fall an easy prey to her. And as Irenè was present, the other boat could not be used against her except at the risk of Irenè's life. He ordered all the men out of his boat. Hutton tried to remonstrate, and asked to be allowed to go with him, but he sternly ordered him to make the best of his way back to the Ilione. Vivian believed that he would be able alone to disable the dhow, and that it would only cost one life to do it. All he wished was not to be killed before he had cut the dhow's rudder pendants. So he steamed away, one hand on the tiller and the other on the reversing lever of the engine. A Frenchman would have embraced his messmates and taken a melodramatic farewell; but Vivian went away with the unostentatious heroism of one who was only doing his duty. His last words to Hutton were "Keep my boat between you and the dhow until I get up with her, then go straight away to the ship; and whatever happens, don't turn back."

Then he sheered off and steered for the dhow, and soon the nose of his boat was touching her counter. Standing up in the stern with one foot on the tiller, he hacked away at the rudder pendants with his sword. He had cut one of them, when a musket ball hit him in the arm, but fortunately not in the sword-arm ; one more stroke, and the other pendant was severed, the dhow went up into the wind, and became unmanageable. Irenè was saved. But his sword had hardly cut through the strands of the rope when a bullet pierced Vivian's heart, and his troubled spirit was at rest at last, beyond the reach of this pitiless world. Irenè, the enchantress of the shore, could wound him no more ; her magic had lost its spell over him for ever. See how quietly he sleeps after life's fitful fever !

Even when the image of death was close before his eyes he had not forgotten his duty to the Ilione. The paper which he gave to Hutton contained his last iustructions to Graves, to be obeyed when the hand that wrote them could write no more ; and they showed as little fear of danger as if they had been written just before a review at Spithead :

“ Search the coast thoroughly with the boats, but don't take the ship nearer in shore than seven fathoms ; then go and report yourself to the flag at Bombay. You will find the gunnery returns in my despatch-box. Take the Hendersons back to Zibar immediately, before going after dhow. Good-bye ! ”

HID IN A TURF-RICK.

AN IRISH EPISODE.

“**T**HE Irish are a fine race ! ”

“ That’s your opinion, is it ? ”

The speakers were myself and Ellerslie, captain in the Royal Engineers, or the “Sappers,” as we called them in popular phraseology. Place, the smoking-room of the R.A. mess at Woolwich. Time, anywhere in the small hours. When I say that of the above sentences the first was spoken by me, I shall be in position to plunge at once *in medias res*.

After uttering the above oracular answer, Ellerslie puffed away silently at his long havana for a while. I did not interrupt him, for I saw a twinkle in his eye, and knew that there was something coming presently. He was one of those men whose thoughts it is not well to hurry, for fear of losing their thread altogether.

At last it came, as I anticipated.

“ I don’t think I ever told you, did I, of my adventures in that lovely country ? In fact, the story is so much against myself, that I thought it just as well to keep it dark. However, if you will swear solemnly to be ‘ silent as the grave,’ I don’t mind telling you now. At all events, it is not a bad joke as it turned out, though it might have been a serious one.”

Of course I promised inviolable secrecy, however good the story might be, and having fortified himself with a brandy-and-soda, Ellerslie began :

"I daresay you know that in the spring of 187-I was sent to Ireland on special service to see about building new barracks in two or three places where they were needed, especially at Longford, where the Government had at that time an idea of quartering a whole cavalry regiment, though now I believe they have come down to one troop of Scots Grays. I was rather pleased with the commission, for I had never been to the Emerald Isle before, and saw my way to a pleasant little excursion at Government expense. Of course as all my disbursements *en route* were to be paid for me by the liberality of my country, I chose the most convenient way of getting to my destination, and travelled, *via* Euston and Holyhead, by the night-mail, the Wild Irishman, I believe they call it.

"We left Euston at 8.25 p.m. I didn't feel much inclined to sleep, and you know I am a great smoker, so I turned into a compartment sacred to the consumption of the soothing weed. There was only one other occupant besides myself, a man of about forty, well dressed, but not to my mind a gentleman. Indeed, at first sight, I put him down to be what he was, a well-to-do Irish farmer returning from a business trip to town, and indulging himself in the unwonted luxury of a first-class carriage.

"Whatever other faults those Irish have, they are certainly a most friendly race. By the time we got to Rugby I had told my fellow-traveller all about my projected plans for seeing his native country, and found that he rejoiced in the name of Cormack, and lived in the county Westmeath, not far from the Longford

boundary. Before we reached Chester we were sworn friends, and by the time we arrived at Holyhead I had promised to pay him a visit during my stay in his part of the country. This visit it was which gave me such a taste of Irish customs as I could very well have dispensed with.

"Not to delay too long, I shall pass over all the incidents of my first fortnight or so in the Emerald Isle, they being no doubt exactly what any one else would have experienced under like circumstances. At length I reached Longford, got through my work there, and determined to call on my new-made friend, for which purpose I took train to a little station called Edgeworthstown, and there obtained an outside car with a lean horse and a very ragged driver, who undertook for the sum of eighteenpence per double mile (Irish) to convey me to my destination. As to the name of the said destination, I dare not venture on it. It began with the usual 'Bally,' ended, I think, with a 'y,' and had I fancy about four syllables between, of a nature utterly unpronounceable to English lips. Suffice to say that we got there at length, and pulled up at the door of a very respectable slated farmhouse, with thatched out-buildings and a well-kept grass-field, on which two or three colts were feeding, of a slimness of limb and beauty of make that proclaimed their owner a racing man.

"The said owner met me at the door with an effusive welcome, and asked me into a well-furnished parlour, the taste of whose ornaments contrasted favourably with what I should have expected in the house of an English farmer of the same rank. Presently the mistress of the house and a pretty fresh-looking daughter entered and shook hands with me with native polite-

ness. I expressed a wish to see the farm, and Cormack readily offered to show it to me, first, however, saying a few words in a low tone to his wife, who went out of the room. A moment after I heard wheels driving away outside.

“‘Only the car, yer honour,’ said Cormack, in answer to my look of inquiry, ‘I made free to send it away for ye ; it’s with us ye’ll be stopping now, plase God.’

“It was true enough. My faithless Jehu having been paid in advance by me had been only too ready to depart, and, unless I chose to walk back to Edgeworthstown, which I did not feel inclined to do, I was to all intents and purposes a fixture. At first I was inclined to be annoyed, but the exquisite naïveness of the whole proceeding amused me, and I was really flattered by the solicitude of my would-be host ; so, after a few half remonstrances, I was induced to write a telegram for my baggage, which Cormack confided to a young imp who appeared to be doing odd jobs about the place, bidding him ‘run over to the post-office and give it to Mister Moran himself, and tell him it’s immadiate.’

“I stayed some little time at the Cormacks’ seeing the country in company with my host, and forming my ideas of Irish political economy as it is, and as it should be, which being rather a hobby of mine I won’t now trouble you with. There was a gentleman’s family living in the neighbourhood, which I soon made the acquaintance of, as in that out-of-the-way locality the arrival of a stranger was as great an event as that of a foreign potentate in London. Several afternoons I spent pleasantly at ‘the big house,’ playing lawn-tennis with the young ladies of the place, whom I found to be far more proficient in the art than their English sisters, probably from the solitude of their country life

having obliged them to concentrate their energies on that particular form of amusement.

“One day that I had been spending in the above manner, and on which I had accepted a kind invitation to dinner *en famille*, I noticed that Mr. M—— seemed more absent than usual, and a trifle quick-tempered, as though he had been annoyed by something or somebody. When the ladies had left us, and we were sitting over the usual postprandial bottle of wine, he took a letter from his pocket and showed it to me.

“‘That’s the kind of thing we have to put up with here, Mr. Ellerslie,’ said he. ‘You mustn’t go away with your ideas of the country too much *couleur de rose*.’

“*That* was in truth a strange production. It was written, or rather laboriously printed, on a sheet of coarse paper, headed by a rough but spirited drawing of coffins and bell-mouthing blunder-busses. Below was the following composition, of which I made a copy out of curiosity :

““M.M. DONT . GO . TO . MOTE . OR . I . WL . B . YOOR .
END . FET . IT . B . RIT . OR . WRONG . FET . PVT .
HIGGINS . STVY . AT . OME .”* ”*

“I looked at my host for an explanation.

“‘It is a threatening letter,’ said he, ‘and not the first either that I have received. The printing is easy enough to read on the phonographic principle, with the caution that most of the A’s and L’s are upside down. The meaning is, that one of my tenants having against my express orders ploughed up a grass field, I have

* Translation : “M—— M——, don’t go to Moate, or I will be your end. Let it be right or wrong, let Pat Higgins stay at home.” The above is an exact copy of a threatening letter in the author’s possession.

given him notice to quit, and went into Moate yesterday to consult my attorney as to what compensation I was obliged to pay under the Irish Land Act. I got this the day before. I am not personally much afraid of the fellows, but it is very annoying ; and I am always on thorns lest one of those letters should reach my wife ; it would almost frighten her to death, I fancy.'

" ' You met with no interruption going into Moate, I suppose ? ' said I .

" ' No ; but I took my precautions. I got a policeman on my car and drove in by a roundabout route. It isn't a pleasant way of doing things, is it ? '

" I quite agreed with Mr. M. that it was not, and expressed my surprise that the author of the letter could not be brought to justice.

" ' You don't know the Irish, Mr. Ellerslie ; there is not a soul about here who would not swear black was white rather than be the means of convicting a neighbour. You know yourself how completely the police system failed over so daring an offence as the murder of the late Lord Leitrim. With such people as witnesses and jury, what is to be done ? For my own part I have no doubt that Mr. Pat Higgins himself wrote that letter, but hunting up any evidence would be hopeless.'

" A sudden thought struck me. I had seen that the last few words of the document were lighter in colour, as if they had been blotted. If so, would there not remain an impression on the blotting-paper ?

" I don't know what evil spirit took possession of me at this juncture, unless—I own it with contrition—it were that of inordinate self-conceit. Should I be able to get enough evidence to convict Pat Higgins myself,

I should certainly derive much credit for my sagacity, and have an excellent story for my friends in England on my return. With this end in view I said nothing of my happy thought, determined to work it out myself.

"Next morning, having found out the locality of Higgins' cottage from Cormack, I went to make a call there. The sole occupant of the tenement when I arrived there was a wrinkled old woman sitting on a three-legged stool and smoking a black clay-pipe. She looked at me suspiciously, but her native hospitality forbade her to refuse me a seat. For the first time I felt some qualms of conscience at the character of my errand, but these were speedily dissipated by the sight, in a corner of the large open hearth, of the very thing I was seeking, a piece of dirty blotting-paper crumpled up into a ball. To be sure the floor had not been swept for years, judging from its appearance, and there was no telling how long the paper might have lain there, still I felt a conviction that it was the object of my search.

"The devices to which I resorted to get possession of that mute piece of evidence were worthy of a detective policeman. I manœuvred my chair closer to it under pretence of feeling a draught, though with the unpleasant consciousness that the old woman did not believe me. Fortune, however, favoured me at last in the shape of a fierce contest between an old sow and a dog just outside the door, which made the crone hobble out briskly to separate the combatants. She was not gone long, but I had plenty of time during her absence to secrete the paper. As soon as I decently could afterwards I took my leave.

"The moment I was out of sight of the door I

opened my prize and found it to be what I hoped, a fairly good inverted copy of the threatening letter. Of course the last words were the most distinct, but on the whole it was a very pretty piece of *prima facie* evidence against Mr. Pat Higgins. I presented the paper to Mr. M., who praised my sagacity and thanked me warmly for my exertions on his behalf. That same evening I made a deposition before a magistrate who lived near by, and, much to his surprise, Higgins was arrested.

"Now I come to the unlucky portion of my story. How my share in the foregoing proceedings got about I don't know; but a day or two after this I found a great change in Cormack's manner towards me. Hitherto he had been hospitality itself; now he seemed anxious to get me to leave his house, though he was as studiously polite in hiding his wishes as the most finished gentleman could have been. Of course, however, I could not stay longer with a man who was tired of me, and I signified to him accordingly my intention of leaving him. He appeared to me somewhat relieved by the news.

"I dined at Mr. M.'s the night before my departure, after a farewell game of tennis with the ladies, and did not leave the house till nearly dusk. As I was walking back to Cormack's I noticed footsteps behind me, and, looking round, saw that I was followed by a small body of men all armed with sticks. Not wishing them to come up with me I quickened my pace a little. They did the same, and closed on me somewhat.

"I had to pass a sharp turn on the road. Just as I neared the hedge, and for the moment lost sight of my followers, I saw a woman on the other side close to me. Leaning forward, she said eagerly, 'Run for

yer life, sir ; it's you they're after.' Before I could reply she had sunk down behind the hedge again as my pursuers came in sight.

"I hope if ever there be any chance of holding my own that I shall not be found ready to run away ; but when followed by a dozen men with sticks it is about the only thing that can be done, so I trust I may be pardoned for taking to my heels.

"The men instantly followed at full speed, and for a time the pace was hot. But, having still my tennis shoes on, and being naturally swift of foot, I soon distanced them, and they were a good half mile behind when I reached Cormack's door.

"Cormack himself was standing on the threshold. At one glance he took in the situation, having probably had some previous information as to what was going to happen. With a muttered oath he seized me by the arm and hurried me through the house and into the yard at the back. There was a rick of turf there which had that day been opened, leaving a small aperture in the smooth continuity of its rows.

"'Get in there, sir,' said Cormack, 'and you, Pat,' (addressing his son who was working in the yard when we entered) 'build up the clamp again while I go and lock the door. An' if ye tell the boys where the gentleman is ye're no son of mine.'

"The case was not one which admitted of parleying. I got into the rick, and Pat built up the outside turf with marvellous celerity. There was room enough for air and sound to enter through the interstices between the sods, but the dust nearly choked me. However, I was glad enough of even that refuge when I heard the storm of curses that broke from my pursuers, as, having at length burst open the door, they poured into the yard.

“‘ So help me God ! ’ I could hear Cormack saying, ‘ I let him out at the back-door, boys. Was I to let the gentleman be murdered in me own house an’ he staying there ? ’

“ Curiously enough, as I thought, the angry men admitted the plea, but all now turned upon Pat to know which way I had gone. He being no better than most of his countrymen in the matter of truthfulness, gave them most minute directions as to the route I had taken, and, after a hurried search of the house and yard, they started off in pursuit.

“ When they were out of sight Pat unpacked me. By this time I was almost fainting from the suffocating dust and smell of the turf, and I was glad to sit down in the kitchen and have a draught of buttermilk. Meanwhile Cormack had saddled one of his horses and brought it round to the door.

“ ‘ Get up on that horse, sir,’ said he, ‘ and ride as hard as ye can to the police-station at Bally—— ; it’s the only place ye’ll be safe in after this. I’ll send on yer luggage there for ye. I’ve saved ye this day because ye were stopping in me own house, but only for that I wouldn’t have put out a finger to help ye for an English informer as ye are. So there’s no thanks due to me.’

“ I attempted a few words of explanation and gratitude, but I confess to feeling decidedly ‘ small ’ as I rode away, and inwardly took a vow never to interfere with other people’s business again.

“ I sent my late host a cheque afterwards for what I considered a fair sum for my fortnight’s board and lodgings, with a letter expressing my sense of obligation to him and my wish to have made him a present to remember me by did I not fear to offend him. The cheque was returned without a word.

"I was obliged to attend at the trial of Pat Higgins, who, rather to my satisfaction, was triumphantly acquitted by a jury of his compatriots, so that all my trouble and danger had been incurred for nothing. After that you won't wonder that I am not very proud of the story and don't want it to go beyond you."

"Who was the woman who warned you?" asked I; "did you ever find out?"

"She was Cormack's daughter, and was engaged to Pat Higgins as I found out afterwards," answered Ellerslie. "After that I think you will agree with me that the Irish are a peculiar race."

"Shall I tell you what I think was the most peculiar thing in the whole story?" said I.

"Well?"

"Sending back your cheque!"

DINNERS IN MANY PLACES.

"We can live without love : what is passion but pining ?
But where is the man who can live without dining ?"

"**G**IVE me good plain honest English fare," says John Bull abroad, to the disparagement of what he calls "foreign kickshaws;" "I don't want anything else." Yet the most particular man in existence, as to affairs of the palate, is this frugal-minded, Spartan-tasted, boastful Briton ; and the "Mossoo" at whom he sneers for putting his knife half-way down his throat, or the American who flies at his food like a starved tiger, swallows ill-cooked ill-served victuals with a better grace than John Bull, with all his assumption of simplicity.

Every one who has seen men and manners by travelling would probably, if he could strike a balance between the good and bad dinners he has eaten, find it very even. And even in this gastronomic age, when none but the most ardent of explorers can find spots where absolutely a decent meal is not to be had for love or money, we may run back over dinners eaten in strange places and under various circumstances, and in them find much that is amusing and instructive, when put into a collective shape.

Let us consider first that modern symposium, a dinner given by one of the great City Companies of

London. It is not the good fortune of every ordinary mortal to possess sufficient interest in high places for a ticket to one of these banquets (we call the daintily-printed fancifully-engraved card of invitation a "ticket," because as such it is described by the guardians of the doorway); but he who has been thus favoured may write the experience down as one not easily to be forgotten. Let the inexperienced one picture to himself a noble many-raftered hall, grand in its vastness of length, height, and width; venerable with its gorgeously painted windows, its black oak-panelling, and its memories of many hundreds of years of grand banquets and cheery reunions, and of many hundred names famous in all the arts of war and peace; beautiful with the snowiest of table-cloths, the rarest of flowers, and the most exquisite of gold and silver plate; proportions and details bathed in the soft gentle light which only wax candles can shed, and spread before him everything which can make a modern civic banquet the very perfection of luxury, elegance, and refinement; let him pick out a seat from which he may observe everything unobserved, and let him arm himself, in imagination, with the appetite of Milo the Cretonian, who

"An ox slew with his fist,
And ate it up at one meal;
Ye gods! what a glorious twist!"

(as says the inscription over the doorway of the Queen's Hotel, the old Bull and Mouth, in Aldersgate Street), and sit down.

Yes, sit down and prepare as for combat; for, look you, this *menu*, light and sparkling as it reads beneath its French disguise, is no frothy bubbling matter, but a stern list which must be attacked and conquered at any cost—at least, so seem to think the good hosts

who convene the banquet. The most appetising of soups, the rarest of fish, the daintiest of entrées and side-dishes, the noblest of joints, the most delicate of feathered rarities, follow each other in swift silent succession, washed down or titillated by hocks or sherries of the oldest and purest and most extravagant vintages. Then, after he has dipped into a dozen dishes of sweets, fruits, and preserves, let him clear his mouth with an olive, the shape (and almost the size) of a Rugby football, in preparation for the aftermath. The aftermath consists of a prolonged dally with wines of a rarity and purity unknown to three-quarters of the poor fellows who, from ten to five, every day struggle for their daily crumbs, close by these very walls ; of a half sleepy-enchantment of admirably rendered music ; of a continual glow of patriotism and self-applause, occasioned by speeches from gallant soldiers and sailors, impressive bishops and well-satisfied statesmen. Only a good cigar is needed to make the position Elysian ; for the grand charm lies in the fact, that at these big dinners we are such atoms, we are so independent in our humility, we are so contented to have everything done for us, and so delighted in comparing the positions of the bustling waiters with that of the "nobs" upon whom falls the onerous duty of speechmaking and universal congratulation. Right well contented do we rise when we begin to experience a feeling of weariness, don our overcoats, receive at the hands of a gorgeous official a splendid Henry Clay, and a case of variegated sweets, known as a "hush box," and turn homewards, brimful of kindly thoughts towards mankind in general and City Companies in particular.

Let us peel off the "claw-hammer" coat, the fault-

less tie, and the glittering patent leathers, and change the scene to the west coast goldfields of New Zealand.

We are bronzed like Zouaves, bearded like pards, our red shirt-sleeves tucked above our elbows, and our mole-skin breeches tucked into our big boots. It is midday, and we are very, very hungry, for we have been sifting and scouring under a blazing sun since six o'clock this morning—sifting and scouring some dozen “buckets” of wash-dirt, which means pretty hard labour if we look at the ratio rule that two dishes of “wash-dirt” equal one bucket, sixty buckets equal one “load,” and one “load” equals a ton of earth. Very gladly we throw down pickaxe and sieve, and turn into our “six by eight” tent for the midday meal. Good native meat, rich fat mutton, the universal “damper,” and British beer, with a final touch of “old peculiar”—that is, if we happen to have been in luck, or have not been down town very much of late. In that case, “damper” and the “old peculiar” have to be put up with. A bad old custom that, so say the moralists at home, of “nipping” old peculiar and other “short” drinks, and perhaps it is when taken as these “nips” are at the clubs of the far East, and in too many houses at home ; but when well earned, they are not only grateful, but almost necessary as men will tell you who know what it is to work hour after hour in all sorts of weather and under all conditions. Well, we sling our kettle and we mix our “damper,” and we light a pipe whilst the banquet is preparing. Then we fall to. We forget to say grace; or unfold our napkins ; but some day we hope that our little pailfuls of dirt will enable us to live where we can do both ; after the meat, somebody—probably a “new chum”—produces canned fruits or a bottled delicacy ; and the same knives which hewed through

mutton and mixed the flour of the "damper," wiped on our moleskins, or perhaps not all, serve for the division of the sweets. Then a pipe at our ease under the tent shade, and back to our arm-aching, often heartbreaking, labour, which, however, on this occasion, seems light after so sumptuous a repast. Very often the meals are enlivened by disturbances outside, to which very little attention is paid unless they assume the proportions of a regular row. Dennis O'Hegan and Terence Macdermot find the after-dinner siesta a capital opportunity for raising and discussing questions of well-known difference between them. Sometimes they may be quieted by a few judicious words from their friends; but there are questions, principally relative to family distinctions and descent, which invariably act on them as does a red rag on a bull. Six-shooters are brought into play, knives are whirled about, other O'Hegans and Macdermots are attracted to the battle-field, and there is no peace in camp until one or other party is satisfied and a good deal of blood has been shed. However, these scenes, thanks to a vigilant administration, are much rarer now than in the old days of the first gold rush; and a regular fight is something, when found, to be made note of.

Well, good-bye to the west coast and O'Hegan and Macdermot, and over fifteen thousand miles back to the old country of before-dinner blessings and napkins.

Her Majesty's 138th regiment of Middlesex Rifle Volunteers are encamped on the bleakest of bleak Surrey commons. They are under canvas here for a week, and are trying to think that they are only playing at soldiers. If it were not for the presence of the gray uniforms one might imagine oneself in a camp of regulars, in so thoroughly a soldier-like and business-

like manner is everything conducted. It has been raining incessantly for four days, and these gentlemen—yes, gentlemen by birth and education—accustomed to their morning tubs, and their cosy clean beds, and their nine-o'clock breakfasts, and their life almost of *otium cum dignitate*, have been quartered here, exposed to all sorts of weather, huddled together ten in a tent, without even a change of clothing, much less luxuries in the shape of clean linen and shaving-water, and are as merry as crickets with the prospect of another two days' hard work and roughing it before them. They are not a bit like regulars, inasmuch as they have no stamp on them of the stunted factory hand, or of the half-starved farm-labourer, or of the town gaol-bird. They are fine young Englishmen, public-school men and university men many of them, broad in the shoulder, clear of eye, firm and active of gait; men trained on the river and the cricket and football field to hardiness and strength. Just the men for efficient light infantry. They have been out since nine o'clock this morning, in heavy marching order, helmets, greatcoats rolled over the left shoulder, water-bottles, havresacks, rifles, bayonets, and twenty rounds of blank cartridge in their pouches; scouring the country round, up to their knees in mud, beaten by cold wind and driving rain, in pursuit of an imaginary foe. And they have just tramped with a swinging step into camp to the soul-stirring strains of “Georgia.” As it is one o'clock, they are ready for their midday meal, of which we have been invited to partake by a hospitable sergeant whom we know to be a rising exhibitor at the Royal Acadamy. The cooks—none of your professional army men, but members of the corps—have been slaving for two hours past, carrying piles of brush-wood, damming up leaky cooking trenches,

inducing damp fuel to burn, cutting up sides of beef, and preparing vegetables; and as the men march in, a savoury scent salutes their nostrils. "Battalion, halt! Front! Right-turn! Dismiss!" There is a stampede of gray coats to the tents; impedimenta are quickly cast off; and as the rain has stopped for a few minutes, and a ray of sunshine drops through the banks of heavy clouds, arms are piled outside the tents, tent-doors are opened wide, and preparations made for dinner.

Then comes a sharp ringing bugle note, and the shout for "Tent orderlies!" echoes from one end of the camp to the other. From each tent run out the men told off for the day's dirty work, range themselves in line, and are marched off to the kitchen trenches. Here each man receives a can of meat-soup and three huge loaves of bread, the rations for his tent, armed with which he returns to where his comrades have already improvised a table-cloth on the ground with a waterproof sheet, and seats with buckets or greatcoats folded up. Then away again to the canteen for beer, and the orderlies may sit down to their well-earned repast with the rest.

The repast, considering the circumstances under which it is cooked and served up, is very fair; and if there is a little too much fat, or too little lean, or too much "leather" about the meat, young men with vigorous appetites, whetted by vigorous exertion, are not likely to consider it as a *casus belli* with the cook. At any rate, what knives and forks there are move with considerable rapidity; cups and mugs seem never to be standing idle; and even conversation flags, so ardent is the attack upon the victuals. About half-way through the meal, the officer of the day, accompanied by the orderly sergeant, visits every mess to hear complaints,

and to see that the men have everything. But there are no complaints to-day, as the sergeant of our tent says, with his mouth choke-full of meat, bread, and potatoes ; and the men are happy with the regulation rations, supplemented by little dainties from the canteen. Then a few beatific moments for tobacco consumption, and preparation must be made for the afternoon parade by a general cleaning of arms and furbishing up of accoutrements.

There are some Englishmen who are blessed with a capacity of taking in meals under any circumstances. Nothing seems to unhinge them but unpunctuality and indifferent cooking, which they look for at all times and places, and indulge in a national grumble should they not be gratified in these particular whims. More especially does this apply to Britons at sea who are never sick, and therefore hector it pretty considerably over their less fortunate fellow-passengers, to whom a voyage by steamer is tantamount to the greatest possible physical suffering. This may be noted on board the Antwerp boats and the Dublin packets ; but to estimate more accurately the proportion of sailors to non-sailors, let us transplant ourselves further abroad, and imagine ourselves to be on board a China steamer homeward bound, and tossing, say, between Hong-Kong and Singapore.

The clouds have been gathering, and the sea has been behaving itself in an exceedingly eccentric manner all the morning ; little ominous signs tell the old sailors amongst our passengers that something out of the ordinary is to be expected—signs which would escape the notice of the “griffin” or inexperienced traveller, such as the taking in of the deck-awnings ; the reefing of every sail ; the presence on the bridge,

not only of the officer of the watch, but of the skipper and first officer ; the putting on of mackintoshes and overalls by the crew ; and the securing of cattle and poultry-pens by stout lashings ; not to mention that nasty indescribable touch about the wind which invariably presages bad weather. At half-past five the dinner-gong sounds. There have not been so much "bull-board" and laughter and flirting to-day as usual : and there certainly is not the customary alacrity, not to say eagerness, consequent upon the sound of the dinner-gong. In fact, to-day we are but a dozen at the saloon-table ; in fine weather we muster as many as sixty. Things appear bad at sea as we descend the companion and take a last look round, and the vessel rolls and pitches in a manner very little calculated to promote the comfort of the coming meal. We begin under a sort of cloud ; conversation carried on in an undertone ; laughter grim and forced ; the inquisitive man, who is always bothering the skipper with questions about our progress and the time of arrival, and who notes everything in a big diary, has no skipper to talk to ; the humorous Irish officer going home on furlough is quiet and subdued ; the effervescent young ladies, on their way from being very great dames at a small China port to be nobodies in big London, are groaning in their cabins ; the tables are fitted with "fiddles ;" and the sole representative of the ship's executive is the doctor.

"I suppose there ain't such things as regular storms out here ?" hints a gentleman, with a very eager eye for an answer.

"Sometimes we get them rather hot," replies the doctor.

"But not at this time of the year ?" hopefully and confidently continues the gentleman.

"O yes, we're never free from them in the China seas," reassuringly states the doctor.

"But," chimes in another passenger, "we shouldn't feel anything in a big ship like this?"

"Well," replies the man of medicine, "I've known bigger ships than this—"

Here a tremendous crash, as if the vessel were being taken up like an eggshell and crumpled in a giant hand, breaks the conversation. Every man's knife and fork drop as from the influence of a galvanic shock ; a steward, with a large dish of curry, loses his balance, shoots over the saloon like a cricket-ball, and disappears into a cabin ; cries and shrieks, unparliamentary expressions of all sorts, issue from the berths ; glasses rattle ; hat-boxes and trunks slide and bump in all directions ; and by one touch of the Storm Fiend's wand our peaceful little world is turned to Pandemonium. Then comes a comparative lull, and the miserable remainder of the feasters proceed with the remnants of the banquet. Hot sickening dish follows hot sickening dish—fat boiled joints, fowls smothered in butter—and with marvellous ingenuity there seems to be heaped into the *menu* everything calculated the most to disgust us and turn us against our meal. At intervals there are big lurches, when one side of the table looks down upon the other as from a giddy height, when glasses suspended in racks seem to stand out at right angles, and when mouthfuls have to be watched, dodged, and waited for ; not to speak of all sorts of minor convulsions and concussions which come at odd unexpected moments, and create more ill-temper and mischief than the big lurches. Our party is sadly reduced by desertions, and consists of the doctor, the second officer, four hardened travellers,

and a sturdy old Yorkshire lady, who retires from and returns to the table at intervals, much to the mingled admiration and disgust of the others. Staggering stewards at length sweep away the plates and dishes, and place our bottles of wine securely between the "fiddles"; we, clinging like monkeys to the seats and table, endeavour to make ourselves as jovial as circumstances will permit. We shut our ears to the groans, lamentations, and divers other more suggestive sounds; and the doctor, a shrewd witty Aberdonian, commences one of his choicest yarns; we balance our glasses as best we can, when a mighty shock, greater than any we have experienced hitherto, seems to turn the huge vessel upside down. Away spin plates, bottles, and glasses, and we are all jerked bodily out of our seats, and rolled away in a confused struggling mass of heads, arms, and legs the whole length of the saloon. A sound of rushing water fires still further our imaginations; we are convinced that everything is over with us this time; but somehow or other manage to pull ourselves together, and discover that after all we are not doomed to a watery grave. Then the storm seems to moderate, and we have pluck enough to put our noses out above the hatchway. An officer, wrapped to the eyes in mackintoshes, stumbles along the deck, points to the ruin and desolation on deck, and informs us that it has been "touch and go" with us for the last hour, and that we have weathered a very bad specimen of a typhoon in the China Seas. We have met each other at intervals since, and invariably agree that our dinner on board the stout old P. and O. steamer was one of the most disagreeable within any of our recollections.

I had heard and read that there were yet places in

London where one could get a good old-fashioned meal, amidst good old-fashioned surroundings, at a good old-fashioned price. As I am fond of digging and delving after remains of old London, painfully aware of the fact that day by day the old edifice is being swept away in the advance of modern civilisation and improvement, one day I dived down an old dusky court off Fleet Street, with the object in view of realising my dreams. So far back from the street that the roar of the great seething world was muffled to a gentle hum, stood my tavern. Very dark, very dingy, was the old place ; yet the stamp of a faded superiority, of a consciousness of having once played by no means an unimportant part in the social life of the day, still clung to it. Once it had been as well known a place as the Holborn or Criterion of to-day, and it was with pleasure that my eyes wandered from the big carved wooden doorway to the row of deep recessed windows, through the cavernous bar into a long dim coffee-room, all of the well-known and much imitated Queen Anne type. I descended to the bar—descent into a house is a very respectable stamp of antiquity—an odd little corner, fitted with a metal counter, a sliding window, and shelves decked with fat little barrels, huge china bowls, and piles of glittering glass—to the coffee-room. And here, cheek by jowl with the every day life of modern London, I was in the presence of the past, and seemed to lose all idea that I was in any other world than that of wigs and swords, laced coats, patches, furbelows, and high-heeled shoes.

I ensconced myself in one of the high-backed dens, and gazed out on to a garden belonging to one of the smallest Inns of Court, until it should please a venerable waiter, who was polishing glasses behind a

screen in the corner, to attend to my wants. When he had completed his task to his satisfaction, he paddled up to me. "A nice little dinner, sir. Yes, sir. A little bit of fish, a couple of lamb chops, a spring chicken, and a gooseberry tart. Yes, sir; in ten minutes, sir. What wine would you like, sir?" All this with deliberation; no scurry and hurry, no panting and whisking of crumbs, as if in for an athletic competition. And I made a very excellent dinner, washed down by a very good bottle of Saint Estéphe and all at a very moderate rate. The fish was fresh, and boiled perfectly; the chops were of lamb, not of old mutton; the chicken was not all legs and carcass; the vegetables were unexceptionable. And what did I pay for all this substantiality and excellency? Will the modern diner-out and consequent grumbler at indifferent fare and high prices believe me if I tell him that the "dem'd total" amounted to four shillings and sixpence? Then I sat and watched the guests who came in. Mostly ancient lawyers; here and there an old-fashioned traveller, who has walked from one of the metropolitan stations, and is making believe that he has just alighted from the "Comet" or "Defiance," as he hurls his pile of rugs into a corner, rubs his hands, and shouts, "Waiter!" in stentorian tones. There is none of the gas and confusion and Babel of the modern chop-house about the old place; the foot-steps are muffled in the deepest of carpets, and the voices seem to be swallowed up in the old stuffy air of the dark, old-fashioned room. The house is pulled down, and with it has been severed one of the last links which bind modern to old London.

And as we may dine in the heart of our great city in the old-fashioned way, so may we find here and there,

within an easy railway journey of the metropolis, relics of old English rustic inn life, spared from the general ruin brought about by the introduction of railways. We must get well beyond bricks and mortar, however, and keep our eyes well open, so as to discriminate between the genuine article and the mushroom substitute which panders to prevailing popular taste by assuming what it has not.

We heard, some months back, that a railway company was about to invade one of our pet Kentish solitudes; so we resolved to walk out and taste old pleasures ere they should be banished for ever out of our reach.

It was dusk ere the last turn of the road brought us within sight of the object of our pilgrimage, and we were glad to see that, at any rate, the advance of the destroyer had not taken an active shape as yet, but was limited to the delineation, by means of tall posts, of the path he meant to take when he did come.

"Let's have a dinner of the old sort," said we to our host, one John Bennenden, a mighty cricketer and no small talker.

"In the old room, sir, and in the old style? Yes, sir."

Meanwhile we had a look round the place. The Strawberry had been an inn of some repute, for it stood in the main Dover Road, and was a changing place for the coach-teams. Huge ranges of stabling and outhouses still attested departed grandeur, and we were saddened to see that the old black walls were covered with announcements of the railway extension. About the house itself there was little for the artist to note save that it was a fine specimen of the rambling, many-cornered, many-chimneyed, quaintly-roofed English

country hostelry. In front stood a huge oak-tree, from which hung a representation of a huge strawberry, outrageously plump as to shape, and unnaturally red as to colour, but for all that looked upon by the natives as a marvel of art; and under the tree were tables and seats in the old style, at which, in an age when there were village philosophers and gossips, lively and loud political discussions would be held. "Our room," as we called it, looked pleasantly out on to a broad lawn surrounded by a thick trimly-kept hedge, over which we could feast our eyes upon as beautiful a sketch of hill, dale, and wood as there is in England. The windows of "our room" opened straight on to the grass, whereon were Chinese cane chairs for the enjoyment of after-dinner cigars and talk; and it was not without a feeling of real regret that we looked out at the well-known scene and realised that it was to be for the last time. Our little sentimental pause was broken by the entrance of John Bennenden with the dinner. Smile not, reader, nor complain that you have been lured on to greater expectations, when you learn that this dinner consisted of ham and eggs, cherries and cream, and good Kent ale. Ham and eggs we had always had when we arrived here hungry upon our walking expeditions, and ham and eggs we resolved to have at this our farewell banquet. But such ham and such eggs! None of your nasty little shrivelled-up pieces of leather, with a tangled yellow-and-white mass dotted here and there, steeped in greasy liquor, such as form the orthodox "'am and heggs" of the British roadside inn; but a huge dish filled with the most deliciously-scented ham, whereon reposed a half-dozen of large, plump, fresh eggs; this, eaten with home-made bread, and washed down by the home-brewed, was a banquet for a

monarch. Then the large “white-hearts,” freshly plucked from the orchard beyond the hedge, and the thick pure clotted cream ! We seemed to forget our sadness amidst the excellence of our fare and the joviality of our conversation ; but it came back with redoubled force when we sat out in the long chairs and watched the smoke from our pipes ascend to the clear evening sky as we had so often done before. It was a wrench, this parting with our old inn, and we had not much joviality left in us when, an hour or two afterwards, we pledged old John in his favourite “yard” glass, which, said he, had been in the house since the Restoration. And we never saw the place under its old guise again. The railway came, the village grew into an opulent suburb, the Strawberry, although retaining the old name, was converted into a glittering gin-palace, the oak-tree was cut down, and we actually knew the place no more. But the beautiful Kentish view remains, and we often talk of the old Strawberry and our last dinner there.

By no means so luxurious even as this humble ham-and-egg dinner was one Christmas banquet at which I “assisted” during the memorable siege of Paris in the year 1870. There were three of us—young Englishmen—students by profession, observers of men, life, and manners by actual occupation, who, until the time of war, rented three humble rooms very high up a very high house in the Rue des Saints Pères. We led a reckless happy-go-lucky sort of a life so long as our funds permitted us ; and when circumstances compelled steadiness and retrenchment, betook ourselves with vigour to our “studies.” When Germany, however, marched to the gates of Paris, our vocation was gone. Not simply that we yielded to the universal efferves-

cence and excitement ; but that, had we been minded to continue our student's life, we could not have done so. When we beheld our venerated lecturer on comparative anatomy a lieutenant of Dragoons, our professor of physiology sergeant in a line regiment, and our botanical instructor capering in blue and gold at the head of a dashing company of "Eclaireurs de la Seine," we threw away note-book and pen, and offered our services in the Garde Mobile. We saw a little service at Le Bourget, Mont Avron, and the sortie of December 21, and got a pretty name for boyish foolhardiness and impatience ; but, as a rule, our arduous duties consisted of swaggering about our favourite restaurants with the crowd of amateur soldiers, half of whom had never heard a *pièce de douze* fired, and the other half could hardly tell the difference between the foresight and the backsight of a rifle. But men were killed by constant sorties and exposure to the terrible weather ; every pair of arms capable of carrying a rifle had to be impressed into the public service, and for every one there were danger, privations, and hard work. Then provisions began to fail, and prices began to rise ; we knew that hampers of good things, consigned to us by fond relations in the belief that Paris, the city of fashion and luxury, could make but a feeble resistance to Teuton veterans, were somewhere about outside—perhaps stowed away in some blockaded railway station, or, more probably, in German stomachs ; and this aggravated our distress. A turkey fetched one hundred francs, radishes were ten francs the bunch, champaigne five francs the glass, eggs one franc each ; but plenty of tobacco, eau de vie, and Strasbourg beer consoled us somewhat, and our guard-room at the Porte Maillot was jovial enough under the circumstances.

Christmas-time approached, and there were no signs either that the Germans were going to leave us, or that Trochu would hang out the white flag. We thought of the preparations for the festal season at home : visions of groaning tables and abundant waste presented themselves to us as we sat over the most meagre of bouillis in the coldest of casemates.

"Never mind," said Aikin, one of my English friends, "we'll have something scrumptious for Christmas. I'm not going to let the day go by without some sort of a celebration ; I don't know what you fellows are going to do. How much cash can we raise between us ?"

We made up about a hundred and fifty francs, and this we determined should be consecrated to a banquet. Christmas morning came, quite in the "good old-fashioned" style of the illustrated papers : thermometer twelve degrees below zero ; the ground hard as iron and glistening with hard snow.

"The three Englishmen want to be excused guard-mounting to-day, sir," said the good-natured sergeant of our section to Lieutenant Bouillabaisse.

"What for ?" asked the lieutenant. "Are they ill ? They ought to be accustomed to this sort of thing."

"No, sir, they're not ill ; they're better than any of us are. But they want to keep their English festival, and have a dinner. They are very good at drill, and fight like demons ; so I do not think you need refuse them."

"All right," said the lieutenant.

So we sallied forth, under the guidance of the worthy sergeant, to forage for victuals. At the end of an hour we returned with a brace of rabbits—got as a great bargain for twenty francs—an aged chicken, a pot of condensed milk, some siege-bread, hard and black as a

rock, and a variegated salad. These delicacies, together with half a dozen rations of rum, some Strasbourg beer, and a keg of eau de vie, we conveyed to the banqueting-hall, a sheltered hut close to the Etat-Major. The smell of the cooking titillated the nostrils of many a poor half-starved Moblot, who wondered how on earth those Englishmen contrived to scrape together a feast unknown in quality even to the gourmets on the staff. If my readers can picture to themselves the face of a weary penniless tramp with a cold joint and a jug of beer set before him, they can form a fair idea of the countenances of us five hungry Moblots when the first course of the Christmas banquet was served. For fully five minutes not a sound was heard but the clatter of knives and forks, and the crushing of bones between hungry teeth. Gradually, as our stomachs felt easier, our tongues loosened ; we laughed and chatted and joked as if there was no such thing as a hungry angry enemy within half a mile of us. Now and then a wistful face peered in ; and more than once our laughter was suddenly brought to a standstill by the sullen boom of a shell close by us. We sang out invariably to the owner of the wistful face to enter and have a glass ; but to the shells we paid no attention whatever after the first two or three. When nothing remained of the solid viands, the keg of eau de vie was broached as tenderly as if it held gold-dust ; and the time-honoured toast of "The old folks at home" was given and drunk with three ringing cheers, which brought heads out of every hut on the battery, and caused Lieutenant Bouillabaisse to ask if a German gun had been dismounted. Then the sergeant gave us one of Béranger's songs, and we drank "France and England" with further cheering. And so we carried on our Christmas

feast, until one of us proposed that the commandant of the post should be invited to crack a glass with us.

"Do you think he'll condescend to come?" I asked.

"What! old 'Alive and Dead' condescend to come where there's a glass of cognac and good company! Try him," said the sergeant. "Besides, we're all equal here, and there's no condescension in the matter."

So we ran over to the Etat-Major.

"Well, my boys, what is it?" asked the veteran, who was reclining on his wooden pallet, his martial cloak around him, a German pipe in his mouth, and a volume of Paul de Kock in his hand.

"Please, sir, we've got a Christmas party over in casemate number twelve; will you come and taste our cognac?"

"Ay, that I will," said the veteran, leaping up at the word "cognac;" and we sallied forth.

"Just as we got well into the open, a large shell sailed majestically down apparently upon our heads. "Ventre à terre!" was the cry; and as if we had been moved by clockwork we sprawled on to the snow, and watched the great brute descend and burst into a thousand nasty fragments. Then we ran for the casemate. The old major, who had gained his name "Alive and Dead" from the charmed life he was said to possess, soon entered into the spirit of our fun, and was foremost in laugh, song, and jest. Not until the keg of cognac was dry did we break up our meeting with "Auld Lang Syne," sung in the good old British fashion, arms crossed and feet on the table.

So we kept our Christmas-day. Forty-eight hours later came the great sortie, and poor old "Alive and

Dead " received his quietus from a Bavarian bayonet as he was leading his battalion on to the charge. When we Englishmen meet now, we never fail to talk of our Christmas dinner at casemate number twelve, Porte Maillot, Paris, anno 1870.

A DAY ON GUARD.

TOOKING back over times long past and gone, my thoughts reverted the other day to the following episode in my life, which I will here jot down as well as my memory will allow me. The scene is Rangoon, the time the middle of the year 1862.

Within a few yards of one of the numerous broad roads which intersect the cantonment there stood a group of buildings of the type then, and for all I know now, prevalent in British Burmah, that is to say, wood floor and posts, walls of bamboo plastered and white-washed, and thatched roof. Of this group one small building served to accommodate an officer, and another and larger one close to it some twenty men ; the whole forming a guard that mounted there daily.

Rather more detached, and surrounded by a high bamboo paling, stood another building, raised nearly six feet from the ground on posts, and accessible only by steps. A few outhouses or "go-downs" complete the group towards which I, then a young subaltern, and the guard, of which I am in command, are marching in the early morning. We arrive opposite the guardroom, find the old guard drawn up to receive us, and the preliminaries of the ceremony known as "relieving guard" are duly performed. We—that is, I and my predecessor on duty—then "fall out," and

exchange a few remarks on the current station "gup" or gossip, after which he observes, "Come along; I must hand you over your charge." We two then proceed to the enclosed building, and mounting the steps find ourselves inside an apartment about twenty feet square, almost devoid of furniture, and dimly lighted by a couple of half-closed wooden casements.

Two women, natives of India, rise from the floor, where they have been sitting, and survey us with an indolent nonchalant expression, as if this was a visitation to which they were pretty well accustomed; which indeed was the case.

In the far corner of the room, and dimly visible in the semi-darkness in which it was enveloped, lay what appeared to be a bundle of dirty cotton rags. Pointing to this my companion observed, "There you are; and now I must be off." I, not unnaturally, make a slight protest, against this summary mode of handing over that for which a guard of an officer and twenty European soldiers was considered essential; for so still and motionless was the object—whatever it was—that it might have been merely a heap of linen awaiting the offices of the "dhobie." But the only answer I receive is, "Can't help it, old fellow. I hand him over precisely as I received him; and as we are strictly forbidden to molest, or even to touch him, you won't make things any clearer if you stay here for a fortnight; so come along."

We descend again to the front of the guardroom; the relief of the old guard is completed, and it marches away, leaving me in charge of something that I have not so much as seen.

But it is time to enlighten the reader as to what this something really was. That bundle of dirty cotton

rags covered the withered helpless form of an old man nearly ninety, whose name and titles, as given at full length by the historian of the Sepoy war, were Abool Mozuffer Suraj-oo-deen Mahomet Behaudur Shah Padishah-i-gazee, ex-king of Delhi; and last, but not least, the Great Mogul himself! Here was *sic transit gloria mundi* with a vengeance! Often as I had seen the good man's effigy on the wrappers of the cards where-with I used to beguile my evenings, I never expected we should meet in the relative positions of gaoler and captive. Often as I had, when witnessing the guard mounting at St. James's Palace, imagined what a fine thing it must be to be intrusted with the honorary safe-keeping of a sovereign, it had never occurred to me that I should one day be responsible for the actual custody of an emperor.

But how came he here? To answer the question we must go back a few hundred years.

The first of the Moguls who figures in Indian history was the great Tamerlane, who, in 1398, overran Bengal, captured Delhi, and fixed upon it as his seat of government. But he never completed the subjugation of the country; other conquests and designs called him away, and it was reserved for his descendant, Zahir Eddin Mahomet Baber to complete what Timour had begun, and to be the founder of the Mogul dynasty in India in the year 1519.

Baber died in 1530, and was succeeded by his son Humayun, whose reign was one long series of struggles against foes from within and without, to preserve and consolidate the empire of his father.

He died in 1556, and was succeeded by Akbar, who is styled the greatest and wisest monarch who ever ruled in Hindostan. At his accession he merely ruled over

the Punjab, Delhi, and Agra. At his death the Mogul empire extended from Hindoo Koosh to the borders of the Deccan, and from the Brahmaputra to Candahar. His toleration of different religions, his humane and liberal policy to his subjects, and his encouragement of literature and science, are sufficient to render his name memorable, and seem to have marked him as a man far in advance of the times in which he lived.

After a brilliant reign of fifty years, he died in 1605, and was succeeded by Jehangîr. About this time our countrymen begin to appear upon the scene. The motto, "Primus in Indis," cannot apply to us as a nation ; for the Portugese had discovered the route by the Cape in 1498, and had established a settlement at Cochin in 1502. But where lucrative traffic was being carried on, the irrepressible Briton could not be far off ; and accordingly after a successful private expedition in 1591, we find a company called the East India Company formed, with a capital of 30,000*l.* in one hundred shares, which company, after being granted a charter by Elizabeth, humbly solicited permission from the court of Delhi to trade with the different Indian princes.

We read that although the first commercial adventures of the company were small, a profit of from one to two hundred per cent was realised ; a result which, to say the least of it, must have been gratifying. Imagine the effect of such a dividend in these degenerate days !

James I. addressed a letter to his "illustrious brother the Mogul," commanding the British merchants to his care. Men who could make a profit of between one and two hundred per cent might well be objects of solicitude to their monarch.

In 1611 the company obtained permission from

Jehangîr to erect factories at Surat, Ahmedabad, Cambaya, and Goga ; and in 1613 he issued a firman confirming their possession of them.

In 1615 Sir Thomas Roe made his appearance as the first English Ambassador at the court of Delhi.

In 1627 Jehangîr died, and was succeeded by Shah Jehan, during whose reign the power and prosperity of the Moguls attained their height.

His dominions were well governed, and enjoyed almost complete tranquillity ; in fact Khafi Khan, the best native historian of the time, says that, “ although Akbar was preeminent as a conqueror and law-giver, no prince who ever reigned in India could compare with Shah Jehan in good administration of every department of state.”

This prince evidently cultivated the well-known Oriental love of pomp and display ; the splendour and magnificence of his court and its surroundings being a proverb in the East to this day.

It was he who constructed the celebrated “ peacock throne ;” so called from its resemblance to the tail of a peacock spread open, and represented in its natural colours by rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and other jewels, the whole being estimated at the value of six million pounds. It was he who built the beautiful city of new Delhi or Shahjehanabad ; and it was he who reared the world-renowned Taj at Agra, in which he and his queen were buried, and which is unsurpassed in beauty, alike of design and construction, by any building in Europe or Asia.

It is a striking proof of the wealth and prosperity of the Mogul empire that all this was not purchased at the cost of heavy taxation or of debt. The finances

during this reign were never otherwise than flourishing, and the people were happy and contented.

The last years of Shah Jehan's reign were embittered by the strife among his four sons for the succession. At length Aurungzebe—the third—succeeded, after a combination of treachery, talent, and violence, in deposing his father and murdering his three brothers in 1658. Shah Jehan lingered in confinement at Agra, till death released him in 1665. Meantime the English had not been idle. In 1639 Fort St. George was founded, and in 1652 the Madras Presidency was established. In 1662 Bombay was ceded by Portugal to England. Aurungzebe, who oppressed and persecuted the Hindoos, seems to have regarded the English with favour; for he sent to compliment them on their brilliant defence of Surat, when attacked by the Mahrattas in 1664, and granted them further marks of his favour. Emboldened by success and prosperity, the foreigners soon began to grow presumptuous; and at length the Mogul was so offended at their growing insolence, that he vowed he would drive the whole race into the sea. He took Surat, and laid siege to Bombay. But the English were soon brought to their senses, and recognising at once that the time had not yet arrived for resorting to force, "stooped to the most abject submission,"* and thus averted the threatened danger. Aurungzebe contemptuously restored Surat, and reinstated the English in their trade. Poor men! they were so few and had come so far, that it could matter little to the Great Mogul whether they stayed or not.

But towards the end of the seventeenth century the tide of the Mogul power began to ebb. Aurungzebe, as he grew old, alienated the affections of his subjects

* Mill's *India*.

by his tyranny and suspicion. His last years were spent in misery, caused by the conduct of his sons, who, following the example he himself had set them, were incessantly striving among themselves for the deposition of their father, and their own succession. He died in 1707, and in him died the last capable Mogul monarch. Blow after blow now fell on the tottering dynasty. In 1723 the Deccan, and in 1730 the Mahrattas, obtained their independence. In 1729 the Persian host, under Nadir Shah, invaded Bengal, captured Delhi, and after signalising their triumph by a shocking massacre of its inhabitants, returned, bearing with them plunder to the amount of 120,000,000*l.* Meanwhile the English, who had outstripped all their European competitors in India, were rapidly increasing in power; and the result of the now inevitable struggle between the Mogul empire under a succession of effete and incapable monarchs, and the East India Company, represented by such men as Clive, Hastings, Coote, Wellesley, and Lake, could not be long doubtful.

Shah Alum II., or Shahzadah, who succeeded to the throne in 1759, spent several years in fruitless efforts to reunite the scattered fragments of what had been the Mogul empire; but was compelled in 1765 to throw himself for protection upon the British, who assigned him the city of Allahabad as a residence, receiving in return the formal cession of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. He made an ineffectual attempt to recover his independence by means of an alliance with the Mahrattas, who quickly turned upon him and imprisoned him in his late capital of Delhi. The capture of that city by Lord Lake, in 1803, again liberated him, and he was allowed to exist as a pensioner of the East India Company, with an annual allowance of 120,000*l.*

He died in 1806, and was succeeded by Akbar Shah, whose sovereignty was purely nominal. In 1835 the currency of India ceased to bear his effigy. He died in 1837, and was succeeded by the subject of this memoir, then past his sixtieth year.

Little more remains to be told. In the ordinary course of events he might have finished his days at Delhi, with no higher ambition than to obtain an increase of his pension, or to secure the succession of his empty title to his son.

But when the terrible mutiny of 1857 broke out, the revolted sepoys flocked into Delhi from the adjacent stations, and proclaimed his restoration to the throne of his fathers.

Although his age and infirmities rendered it doubtful whether he had taken any active part in the mutiny, and its accompanying atrocities, his name alone was sufficient to serve as a pretext for the acts of those who cared little for the moment who was ruler, provided the hated Feringhees were exterminated.

Accordingly, when Delhi was stormed on the 14th September, the first care of the British was to possess themselves of the person of the aged monarch, who, with a crowd of terror-stricken followers, had taken refuge in the tomb of his ancestor, Humayun. Never was the capture of an emperor effected under such extraordinary circumstances. No successful rival surrounded by his adherents, no victorious general at the head of his troops, was there to demand his sword; the handful of conquerors was scattered far and wide over the vast city they had just captured; and a single British subaltern rode to the entrance of the tomb, and dragged forth the last of the Moguls from among the cowering multitude that dared not lift a hand in his defence.

Let the historian of the sepoy war describe the scene : " So Hodson went forth and stood before all, in the open space near the beautiful gateway of the tomb, a solitary white man among so many, awaiting the surrender of a king, and the total extinction of a dynasty the most magnificent that the world had ever seen. It was then but a title, a tradition ; but still the monarchy of the Moguls was a living influence in the hearts of the Mahometans of India. And truly a grander historical picture was rarely seen than that of the single British subaltern receiving the sword of the last of the Mogul emperors in the midst of a multitude of followers and retainers, grieving for the downfall of the house of Tamerlane, and the ruin of their own fortunes."*

After his capture he was tried by a court-martial, and sentenced to transportation for life, Rangoon being chosen as his place of exile. He died there on November 11, 1862, and beneath the shadow of the Golden Pagoda lie the remains of the last of the Great Moguls.

But while I have been moralising, my tour of duty has passed, the measured tramp of footsteps announces the approach of my relief, the bundle of dirty cotton rags is again handed over, and I march back to my quarters, pondering over the strange vicissitudes that brought about my day on guard.

* Kaye's *Sepoy War*.

MY EMPTY HOLSTER.

A PRAIRIE ADVENTURE.

“**B**UENOS noches, amigo,” cried the station-master of Frayle Muerto, bidding me “good-night,” as I mounted my impatient horse, to set out for my lonely “rancho,” some leagues distant over the wild prairie-land.

“Frayle Muerto,” or, in English, the Dead Monk, was a small village at that time, and had just been honoured by the erection of a railway station, containing a substantial refreshment-bar; it being the midway stopping-place on the new line of railway then recently completed between the towns of Rosario and Cordova, situated in the Argentine Republic of South America. My friend Mr. T. had been appointed station-master there, and feeling very lonely in his comparatively isolated condition—there was only one train daily—he was delighted to receive a visit from a fellow-countryman. His neighbours, very few in number, were mostly natives of these parts. They are a rough, half-civilised lot, having more Indian than Spanish blood in their veins, and all the vices of both races in their hearts. In their manners and customs they are, to put it exceedingly mildly, unrefined, and the language they use is what might be called “vulgar

Spanish." The manager at that solitary railway-station did not, naturally, consider these natives to be very congenial or desirable companions. Mr. T. was loth to let me take my departure, although it was high time to do so, as we had sat in his little station-box chatting about old England till nearly midnight.

The moon was shining clear and full as I set off on my homeward journey ; but my horse required neither light nor path, as it started at full gallop over the desolate prairie, knowing instinctively the shortest route to my "estancia" or farm. As we crossed over the long unbroken line of rails, gleaming in the moonlight as they stretched without curve or incline far away into the distance, we passed under the single line of telegraph, causing me to remember a good laugh Mr. T. and I had that evening over the remarks of two natives upon that scientific means of communication. Neither of the two worthies had ever heard of such a thing as a telegraph, much less had they seen anything of the kind. The nearest approach to any such contrivance within their limited knowledge were a few wire fences some enterprising foreigners had put up round their fields. Riding close to the railway, the couple of natives gazed in dignified amazement at the wire stretched high on the telegraph-poles ; then shaking their wise heads, one of the pliosophers addressed his companion, as they rode solemnly underneath the telegraph, saying : " What incomprehensible idiots these railway-making English must be, to erect a wire fence only on *one* side of their railway, and that at such a height that a man can ride under it on horseback ! " " Why," replied the other Solomon, " their ignorance is only equalled by their courtesy, as we can not only ride under the fence, but it is raised to such

an altitude that we need not even inconvenience ourselves by stooping while passing underneath!"

The natives of these parts, or "paisanos" as they call each other, are not only very ignorant, but they cannot conceive strangers, or rather foreigners, to be any wiser than themselves; and it was a countryman of the two wire-fence individuals who, having just been engaged by my friend the station-master at Frayle Muerto, inaugurated his intelligent services by attempting to stop a loaded truck, that was being slowly shunted on to a siding, by placing one of his feet before the advancing wheel, thereby causing him to retain possession for the future of only one foot, which, it need scarcely be stated, he never used for a similar purpose.

My horse was far too impatient to go round about the several colonies of "biscacho" holes we encountered on our short cut across camp, but bounded over them, taking many a leap that would have gratified the highest vaulting ambition of any horse-fancier. These biscachos are like our home rabbits, only they are a little larger and much more fierce. Their warrens are very similar, however. They are most destructive to vegetation and impudently tame. Hobbling off to the mouth of their holes on the approach of any one, they will turn round and stare him out of countenance, uttering a most tantalisingly mocking cry, which has such an incongruous sound, that any attempt to spell it on paper would be simply absurd. In fact, I only met with one man who could give anything like a correct imitation of their cry, and when doing so, his jaws were worked into such fearful shapes, that I used to wonder if they ever could assume their normal condition again. These warrens are generally guarded

by little owls, who, ever on the watch, give timely signal by their weird cry to the biscachos should any stranger appear. The owls, although very small are not deficient in courage, as I found out once when passing one at its usual post of sentry. Being amused at its supreme gravity, I tried in various ways to cause it to relax its seriousness a little, when to my astonishment the bird flew after me, and made such vigorous attempts to get at my head, that I was obliged to beat it off with my riding-whip. This was the only instance I ever met with, however, of an owl losing its centre of gravity, although occasionally I did not resist attempting to provoke their serene composure.

Part of my way home lay along a track used by caravans of bullock wagons on their journeys to and from Rosario : and it was while on this road that I met with an obstacle, or rather two obstacles, which nearly prevented my reaching home that night, or perhaps any other night, for that matter. My horse, suddenly pricking up his ears, caused me to look ahead ; and well in front I perceived two horsemen, proceeding in the same direction as I was, but at a much slower pace. It did not take my horse long to get close up to them, and I then saw that they were "gauchos," or wild natives, having no home or calling, but moving about from one district to another, robbing what they could, alike careless of life and property, and having a special aversion to foreigners, or "gringos," as they called them, an expression meaning both insult and contempt. That I was a gringo they would soon discover by my European costume ; and that they would not only resent my being such, but make an attempt to deprive me of any valuables the said costume might contain, was pretty certain, even if they did not pro-

ceed to further extremities, which was not at all improbable, as they thought no more of murdering any one to obtain what they wanted, than a good house-wife would think of "squashing" a cockroach to insure a clean pantry. In fact, I have dined with gauchos who openly boasted of having killed from half a dozen to twelve men, and were accorded special respect from their less fortunate comrades, who, perhaps, could only boast of two or three little affairs of a like calibre. I was not going to turn out of my way unless compelled to do so, for both myself and my horse were impatient to get home; so I rode on, and as I passed bade them good-night after the Spanish fashion. They, instead of saluting me, as all good natives would have done, spurred their horses after mine, and demanded to know where I was going. The only reply that they got from me was a question (I am a Scotchman). I asked them where they were going. "Por alla," was the response from one of them, which, meaning "over yonder" was somewhat vague. I now got a good view of the fellows, and they certainly were not beauties. They were, without doubt, very tall and well-built; but the ill-looking and vicious expression of their countenances would have made the fortune of any villain in modern melodrama. The sombreros, though broad-brimmed, did not hide the coarse matted hair that hung down over their temples; while the shaggy eyebrows, thick whiskers, and heavy beard did their best to conceal the ingrained dirt on their swarthy faces, which, I suppose, were never washed unless, it might be, by some passing showers. The costumes they wore were in keeping with their appearance. Over the large Spanish hats were gaudily coloured handkerchiefs, which, being tied under the chin in

fanciful loop-knots, formed the triple purpose of sun-shade, ribbons, and necktie. Ponchos, or cloaks, hung loosely over their broad shoulders; and immense top-boots reaching above the knee, impressed on the bright leather with strange green-coloured devices, carried on the heels conspicuous spurs, with rowels of great size and cruel shape. Besides the well-known "lasso" each gaucho had the "bolas" ready to hand. This latter weapon consists of three pieces of strong untanned hide fastened together, each about a yard in length, and having attached to them large wooden or leaden balls, which prove very effective if used skilfully. The natives, when chasing wild horses and cattle, use these bolas by swinging them round and round, then letting them go straight for the legs of the animal they are after. The balls by their weight, twist the thongs round the legs of the galloping beast, causing it to come to the ground, generally head over heels. These balls are also frequently used by the gauchos to trip up the horse of any rider they may wish to catch, sometimes throwing them at the horseman himself; whom, if they hit, they are sure to stun, and sometimes kill outright, should the heavy balls come in contact with any vulnerable part.

I saw both gauchos were getting their bolas ready for action; but still they appeared to be unwilling to proceed to extremes, perhaps hoping that I would quietly surrender, which, however, I had no intention of doing. My horse, whether aware of any danger or not, was certainly becoming almost unmanageable in its impatience at the restraint I was putting on the pace, as I was not willing the men should imagine I intended bolting from them. The clear moonlight shone on the brightly polished steel handles of their

large knives, which the gauchos had in short sheaths attached to broad belts they wore round the waist. In lieu of buttons, coins of various descriptions are utilised as fastenings for these belts; the coins being of all dates, and sometimes of considerable worth, their owners taking considerably greater interest in the relative value of such buttons than they have in any other portion of their apparel, unless it be their spurs and bridle-bits, of which articles they are inordinately fond.

The two gauchos were, by this time, riding only a few yards behind me and asking me several questions, the exact text of which I cannot now remember; but the purport was as to why I should go about at night alone and unarmed, and—as they would surmise—with articles of value about me. No wiser were they by such replies as I chose to give them, and they soon ceased questioning me, commencing to speak in undertones together, apparently consulting as to what they should do. My great object then was, while taking care to keep a few yards of distance between us, still not to let the gauchos think I suspected them of having any designs of attack upon me.

After proceeding for some time in this uncomfortable mode of progression, I came to the spot where my quickest way home was by a small sheep-track, which here led over the camp at right angles to the road on which we were travelling. Not sorry to leave my two companions, I now bade them farewell, remarking at the same time that this was *my* road; and giving the horse full rein, it galloped off along the sheep-track. The gauchos, however, heedless of the good old adage that “two’s good company, and three’s none,” insisted upon keeping up the “triple alliance” by hurrying

after me, shouting out that their road fortunately (?) lay that way as well. I knew this statement was untrue, as the track led "nowhere," losing itself in the prairie not far from my estancia. However, it would have been useless to get up an argument with them about the matter at that time and place, while it would be equally futile to try and convince them of the culpability of saying a thing which "was not." But I remember well crying out to them that I could travel on alone nicely.

The two horsemen came after me, however, in full gallop; but it so happened that my horse was in "fuller" gallop, if the term may be used; for the animal had taken the bit between his teeth, and consequently could suit the pace to his own mind, and he did so with a vengeance: the speed was terrific. Although sorry to think of how the gauchos would conclude they had frightened me into running away, I did not put myself much about while in the open camp, being quite confident my horse's speed would equal, if not exceed, that of my pursuers; but what soon began to give me great uneasiness was the fact of our having to pass right through a wood, which now was not far off. To be carried through a small forest on the back of a horse whose sole ambition for the time being was to exceed the speed of forked lightning, and not leave different parts of my body on various out-stretching branches, seemed to be an utter impossibility. Of course the gauchos would then, besides my personal effects, have my body to share between them: a leg to you and an arm to me, and so on; but I never had the least ambition to undergo the process known as amputation, more especially in such a wholesale fashion. All sorts of plans I tried to pull

up my horse. Standing, for instance, in the stirrups and getting one end of the bridle round me, I lay back as far as possible, thus making a lever of my body, and drawing the horse's head right against my knee. This mode of procedure on my part made little difference in the mode of procedure on the horse's part, only causing it to deviate slightly from the straight course, while it gave the gauchos a considerable gain on me.

There was no help for it ; into the wood we must go. I made myself as small as I possibly could, wondering how much less I should be when we got out on the other side. Although by this time I had made my horse take a considerable *détour*, I could not compel him to avoid the trees ; and as my steed dived in amongst them, I took the strain off the bridle, giving him a better chance to steer clear of such treacherous branches as did for Absalom of old. I think my horse had been rendered giddy by running so far with his head looking behind him, as his course for a while was very unsteady, thus making it much worse for his hapless rider, who never knew on which side of a tree he would be hurled past. Yes, the position was very exciting, but intensely uncomfortable, and the marvellous twists I was obliged to give my body in trying to avoid hosts of protruding branches from different directions at the same moment, and still retain my mounted position, would have astonished any boneless acrobat. One instant a low-lying branch would cause me to flatten myself pancake fashion all over the horse's back, and the next my body would be stretched at extreme right angles from the saddle to avoid an immense limb of a stout tree on my left. The speed was so great, and the turns so sharp and unexpected, that I knew it would only confuse my steed should I

attempt to guide it, and I let the bridle hang loose over its neck.

Soon on we flew in a manner jerky enough to have suggested to any observant navigator the impression that my horse and I were attempting to arrive at every point of the compass at one and the same time.

I soon got so giddy and confused that I found myself obliged eventually to crouch down in the saddle, trusting to luck and the branches obligingly growing high enough to allow of a free passage underneath. As we passed out of the wood at last into the open camp again, I commenced cautiously instituting a search as to how much of myself was wanting; and I was greatly relieved to find that, while several rather necessary parts of my garments had been left behind, my body was still intact. Evidently a little depressed by the innumerable forms of the letter S he had made during his short but painfully circuitous route through the wood, my horse quieted down considerably; and allowing me to get the bit properly adjusted, set off at a respectable canter.

I could not see any signs of my late pursuers, and was greatly annoyed thereby, being naturally anxious to explain that it was my horse, and not myself, who had run away from them. Surely, I thought, they would never be so mean as to remain behind in the wood, disputing over such insignificant parts of clothing as had marked the course of my wild career? One piece of coat-tail and a few miscellaneous shreds from various portions of my wearing apparel would be comparatively useless to them. And then there was the time they were losing. My conjectures were soon arrested by the sudden appearance of the two gauchos, who came riding round some outlying trees not a

hundred yards off. They had taken a straight run through the wood, while my horse had been serpentining about it, thus overtaking me easily. I could see the gauchos now meant mischief. Although they did not evidently wish to come to close quarters, they had the bolas unstrapped. These weapons are more effective when thrown from a little distance, as they thus gain a good impetus. I would have taken out my revolver now and fired, giving my two enemies a few chambers each if necessary; but unfortunately I had left that useful little instrument of warfare at home, and my only weapon of defence was a small penknife.

There was yet time to gallop off away over the wide camp-land. I had occasion once or twice before to put this same horse which I now rode to the test of speed and endurance, and the faithful animal had proved himself well worthy of my confidence. I was determined, however, that running away should be my last resource; so, facing the gauchos, I cried aloud in their own language to them to get out of my path and let me pass by. Their only reply was a demand that I would immediately dismount and let my horse loose. They appeared to be so confident of my compliance with this modest request that they reined their steeds closer to me, thus showing they already surmised my want of firearms, of which, by the way, they have a great dread. I wonder now I felt so cool at the moment, when the gauchos, enraged at my paying no heed to their orders, advanced nearer, swinging the bolas, which the next instant they might let fly at me. It was hopeless attempting to escape now; their lassos and bolas would soon have put an end to my flight. While doing all I could to nerve myself against a strong despair that was crushing down upon me in this great

emergency, I suddenly hit upon a likely means of rescue, which I at once put in execution. Although I had forgotten to bring my revolver, its holster was as usual suspended to my waist-belt. Being well aware of the horror and fear gauchos have of any firearms, I now stood up in my stirrups, and raising my coat with one hand, placed the other to my empty holster, and cried to the advancing highwaymen, "Another whirl of your bolas or another inch nearer, and I shall fire!" The moon's rays fell clear upon my revolver sheath; the gauchos stopped suddenly, looked at each other, and then without a word turned round and fled from me, lying over their horses' necks as they did so, doubtless expecting a few bullets to be sent after them.

My horse and I jogged quietly home: and as I was retiring to rest I could not help smiling when I looked at my revolver, snugly lying under my bed-pillow, where I had unthinkingly left it that morning.

TRUE TO THE CORE.

A WEST INDIAN STORY.

VERY many years ago, when I was but a young assistant-surgeon in Her Majesty's army, I was stationed at Stony Hill, in the island of Jamaica. It was a place most charmingly situated in the Port Royal Mountains, some twelve or fourteen hundred feet above sea-level, and commanded an extensive view of the harbour and town of Kingston, of the naval port and shipping of Port Royal, and of the Palisades, these last being a narrow slip of sand connecting the mainland with Port Royal aforesaid. Originally Stony Hill had been built as a sanatarium for white troops; but the fatal experience of many a regiment having proved that it was not out of the range of yellow fever, these sorts and conditions of soldiers had been marched out and less susceptible black ones marched in, so that I found a detachment of a West Indian battalion—a corps of Africans—in garrison there while my lines were cast in its by no means unpleasant quarters.

Well, one forenoon, while I was at "second breakfast" (lunch), with my cheery friend and constant companion, Lieutenant Charles O'Sullivan of the Engineers, enjoying the many tropical good things the messman had provided, there entered to us Major Smythe, our commanding officer, who, addressing me,

said, "Dr. Vernon, there is work for you to be up and doing. A negro has just ridden into the barrack-yard on a mule and brought me this note. It is apparently in Spanish, a language not in my vocabulary, though fortunately in yours; but from the word *medico* which I see, and which of course means doctor, and from what my orderly has gathered from the muleman, there has been, I fear, a terrible accident hereabouts;" and he handed me a slip of paper torn from a pocket-book, and hastily scribbled over in pencil. It was, as the Major conjectured, in the Castilian tongue, and translated ran thus:

"Señor Commandant, for the love of God, spare your doctor to come here instantly [where?]; Domingo will show him. Lose not a moment, I beseech you;" and it was signed "Enrique de Léon."

I rose at once from table, and ordered my hill pony, a rough-and-ready country-bred animal, to be saddled.

"Five minutes, Major, and I'm off," I exclaimed.

"Oi am wid ye, Vernon," said O'Sullivan, "if so be it's agrayable."

"Assuredly, Charley," I replied; "you will be useful. Clap a good strong knife and a ball of twine into your pocket; it may be a breakdown of a carriole."

I rushed to the hospital, selected haphazard a few instruments and appliances—I knew not what was really needed—and in a very short time O'Sullivan and I, escorted by Domingo, were tearing, without much regard to life or limb, along the narrow rugged bridle-path that led down the declivity of the mountains to a flat at their base. This reached, we crossed full-speed an open grass-grown savannah, or plain, of no great extent; then presently arriving at the foot of another portion of the range, began to ascend a much steeper

and wilder road than that by which we had just now travelled.

If we had had leisure or inclination to look about us, the grandeur and beauty of the scenery which existed at every step of the way must have elicited enthusiastic admiration from both of us, for in no country in the world is there more of the sublime and the picturesque than in this "Land of Springs." But the deep and perpendicular precipices we edged, with mountain torrents foaming and roaring in their gorges; the hill-sides luxuriant with trees and shrubs and creepers, and brilliant with flowers of every hue, we skirted; the glimpses we got of the smiling plains studded with estates or "pens," their "great houses," negro huts, and works glittering in the sunshine; still further away the vista of "the blue, the fresh, and open sea," were all and each disregarded in our anxiety to be on the spot to which our guide was leading.

After we had ridden rather more than three miles—they seemed six—we came suddenly where the road wound round a projecting spur of the mountain, upon a scene which long haunted my memory.

In front of a group of three or four negroes, who were all howling and lamenting after the manner of the West Indian "nigger" in affliction, but doing nothing else, stood a gentleman of some fifty years or more of age. That he was a foreigner was clear, for he wore a long beard and moustache, facial decorations never affected at all by Englishmen of the time. He was also of Jewish race; that his marked, but singularly handsome, Semitic features told at a glance. There he was, his head bowed down on his breast, his hands clasped together, his eyes streaming with tears, his face the picture of abject despair, his every ex-

pression that of “grief which knows not consolation’s name.”

As we dismounted and approached he made an effort to compose himself, seized the hand of O’Sullivan, who was a little in advance of me, and cried rather than said,

“El señor medico militar! mi amigo, my bueno amigo! O, tantas muchas gracias que usted ha venido! Mia hija, mi carissima Zillah; luz de mi vita, muerta, muerta!” (“The army surgeon! my friend, my good friend! O, so many thanks that you have come! My daughter, my beloved Zillah, light of my life, dead, dead!”)

O’Sullivan shook his head. “No sabe; no Spanisho speakho, senhor; non sum Esculapius! La, la, nostro Sawbono; he voster lingo speak!”

Then Don Enrique de Léon—for he it was—came towards me, and, in a voice broken with weeping, told me his sad tale.

He and his young daughter were riding homewards to Buena Esperanza, their coffee estate, higher up the mountain. Just at this spot, where, as I saw, the road narrowed, a huge iguana lizard chasing another had crossed from the “bush” on the left to the precipice on the right side. The pony on which Zillah was mounted started, shied, touched the edge of the abyss, lost its footing, and in an instant fell over with its rider. “O God of my fathers! these old eyes saw the beloved child hurled through the air into the fathomless depths of the chasm, and these old ears heard her piercing shrieks of fear and agony as she was hurried to her grave below! Ay de mi, ay de mi! The joy of my heart is gone; it lies *there!*”

O’Sullivan and I peeped over the giddy brink of the

precipice where the poor distracted father indicated. For the first few yards it was as perpendicular as a wall and bare of vegetation, save some coarse ferns and lichens. Then it sloped for a little distance on to a sort of abrupt, narrow, grass, bamboo, and bramble-clothed ledge or bank ; lower down there seemed to be a more tangled and larger wood-growth ; lower still, we knew not what, but we could plainly hear the river brawling at what must have been the bottom of this pit of Acheron. Seemingly, if the first great difficulty of getting on to the ledge, which might be about twenty yards down, could be accomplished, an active man, with a firm foot and a steady head, might scramble, assisted by the trees and shrubs, to the stream itself.

From the negroes no action could be expected ; it was with them, "Hi, poor missy ! hi, poor piccaninny ! hi, my king !" "Much croy, little *wool*, except upon their black curly pates," as O'Sullivan observed.

But that dear fellow was not long an idle spectator of so harrowing a scene.

"Vernon," said he, "it is not in me nature to be tould that there is a human crayture, man or wooman, young or old, whoite skin or black, in that ravine, and oi standing here loike a spalpeen or a choilde looking on. True, oi can see nothing, but oi'm afther going down, or troying to go down—which may not mane the same thing, howiver—to discover. Thanks to some tacheing in our gymnasium at Woolwich, and yachting a bit, oi can cloimb a troifle, and hang on by me eyelids, as they say at say (sea). Once let me git me footing on the ledge, the rest seems aisy."

"But how on to the ledge ?" asked I.

"Oi'm thinking that there is cord and leather enuf

about the halters and broyldes and saddles of these ponies and mules to give me a considerable drop over the steep front face of the cliff on to or near to that bank ; aftherwards, faith, oi must take me chance. Oi'm doing what is roight, Vernon, what oi feel oi'm bound to do, and what neither you nor that poore auld gintleman there could do. Therefore, oi'll have a shy at it, trusting to Him who wills not that a sparrow fall for me success and me safety."

" But supposing you reach the ledge safe and sound, Charley, and find, or even don't find, the poor girl, how to get you up again ? "

" That has crossed me moinde. Hurry, Domingo, back agin to barracks ; ask the Meejor to sind us some fathoms of rope, a hatchet, a pulley from me stores, and—happy thought—the canvas sacking of a soldier's bedstead ; maybe we'll nade it. If Sapper Jones can come, so much the better."

I wrote a hasty word to Smythe, put a half-dollar into Domingo's hand, and told him to be off.

" Before ye start, me nigger friend," said Charley, addressing the man, " a word wid ye : your mule's tethering cords ; me tankee (thank you), Massa Domingo—away you go ! "

Then did O'Sullivan set about the noble deed he had self-imposed, and which I shall try to describe.

Undoing the ropes and unbuckling the reins and stirrup-leathers from the animals, he knotted and fastened them otherwise firmly together, and made one end of the line thus obtained secure to the stem of a small palm-tree which grew on the edge of the precipice where he intended to descend. Clearly the length was not enough, so he supplemented it with our large bandanna silk handkerchiefs and with the strong

cotton Madras ones of the negroes. Altogether he may have got by this heterogeneous arrangement about fifteen yards of what he called “deevarsified tackle.”

Then stripping off his jacket and waistcoat, he took me on one side, and, all his levity gone for the nonce, he said solemnly (I will dispense with his rich Cork brogue).

“Vernon, is it not a curious thing that here on the face of this Jamaica mountain, we stand three white men of three different religions—the Don there a Hebrew, you a Protestant, and I one of the old Christian faith, the Roman Catholic? What our wordy, but undemonstrative, companions the negroes are, who can tell? They profess the Church, but stick a good deal yet to ‘Obi.’ However, Jew or Christian, or what not, a word of earnest supplication for me to Him who is above us, and who holds us in the hollow of His hand—I can’t but feel, dear old friend, that I am setting my life upon a cast—must avail much. Tell De Léon to say a prayer—offer up one yourself.”

“The Lord protect you, Charley,” I uttered, squeezing his hand.

“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob keep you under the shadow of His wing, noble youth,” said De Léon, in trembling impressive tones, and laying his hand on O’Sullivan’s uncovered head.

“All roight, Senhor; you’re spaking something that is koind and good to me, that oi can see and hear; but, as oi tould you before, Spanish no speaky, whoy, oi’m somewhat at loss to understand ye.”

For a moment or two I saw him in silent meditation; then presently he came up to me and said,

“Oi’m ready, and mark ye—willing.”

He pressed my hand convulsively, whispered in my ear but two words, which to my understanding were a volume, "My mother," bound the loose end of the line around his waist, and scrambled over the cliff.

"Lower away, inch by inch," he said.

It was, believe me, a frightful sight to see him from where I stood, with the line in my hand, dangling in the air, now fending himself off from the rocks, now taking advantage of their slight projections to gain a footing, and so to give us and himself a second or two of rest. Thus, gradually, carefully was he being let down to the ledge, when—the tackle came to an end.

I knew that there must yet be several feet of descent, but I dared not peep over to see how many.

"O'Sullivan!" I sang out.

"What is it, Vernon?"

"The line is paid out."

"Then we are too short by a good deal more than oi care about. However, hold taut! Oi must risk the rest."

There was a fumbling at the end of the tightened cordage, if I can so call it, as it was grasped in our hands—it was while he was undoing the handkerchief about his body—then presently the movement ceased, the line slackened, and his weight from it was gone.

One and all of us craned over; O'Sullivan lay on the ledge motionless.

"Pobre muchacho, caro joven, a mi puerta, es sa muerta, si bueno, si intrepido!" ("Poor boy, dear youth, so good, so brave; his death lies at my door!")

"Hi, up aloft there!" a voice shouted.

"O'Sullivan?"

"Who else, think ye, is here about?"

"Are you hurt?"

"No bones broken, oi think, but sartainly shaken.
The drop was bad."

"Thank God, you're uninjured ! Do you see anything of the young girl ?"

"Here's her straw hat ; but her head's not in it ;
oi'm afther pulling meeself togither to luke for that."

One instant longer and O'Sullivan again hailed us.

"Vernon !"

"What ?"

"Oi've found her. Here she is just under the ledge :
caught in the most marvellous way by a clump of
bamboos."

"Alive ?"

"Yes, but parfactly sinseless ; oi can't rouse her."

"What's to be done ?"

"Nothing, until we git the gear from Stony Hill."

In feverish anxiety we were forced to wait until Domingo returned, and with him Major Smythe and Sapper Jones. They brought all we wanted and more. The first thing done was to cut a long thick bamboo from the "bush," and having "bent" the pulley on to the end of it, and rove the rope through, to lash the cane to the tree before mentioned, making it to project well over the precipice. Then we lowered the running line, which O'Sullivan caught.

"Have they brought the sacking, Vernon ?"

"Yes."

"Sind it down ;" and it was done.

In what manner of way O'Sullivan was occupied with the canvas we could discern by lying flat down, with our faces peering over the cliff. He was adroitly extemporising a sort of hammock with "guys," by which he intended the girl to be raised.

Into it we could see him spreading the feathery

leaflets of bamboo, blades of grass, fronds of fern, so as to form a soft and even couch. Then he disappeared into the thicket, but returned instantly, bearing in his arms, as if she were an infant, a lifeless female figure, and which carefully he put into the litter at his feet. He might indeed have said with Hood,

"Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fa-hioned so slenderly,
Young and so fair."

But no poesy was on the dear old fellow's lips at the time. "Hoist away ! handsomely ! gently !" were the words that reached us.

Under the leverage, at its very extreme, the bamboo bent like a fishing-rod ; but we knew it to be strong, and feared not its breakage. The litter or hammock, call it what you will, slung at the end of the line, swayed to and fro ; but O'Sullivan had firm hold of the guy-rope and steadied it. As for its burden, had it been a theatrical dummy, placed for scenic effect, it could not have remained more inert and immobile.

A few hand-over-hand pulls, and we had the object of our toil and anxiety landed on the roadside. She was a girl of not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, and her figure, which a light close-fitting riding-habit displayed, was slightly but perfectly developed. Her head was bare, save a glorious profusion of long, bright, auburn hair, which fell in loose dishevelled locks upon her neck and shoulders. I don't think I ever looked upon a lovelier face : one not the least like the Hebrew maiden in her beauty as we are accustomed either to recognise, or to believe we recognise, her ; but more, much more, the comeliness of the Saxon *demoiselle pur sang* for generations. I shall not pause

to descend upon her charms; I should convey to the reader but a poor impression of them even if I dwelt for a page or more of this book upon their attractiveness; besides this, as she lay, pale, inanimate, breathing heavily, and bleeding slightly from a wound on her forehead, whiter and smoother than alabaster, I had much more to think about than her beauty. I hastily examined her physical condition, and diagnosed concussion of the brain—there might be obscure fracture of the skull—a broken arm, a broken collar-bone, severe nervous shock, and the wound before mentioned, of itself unimportant.

The distracted father, as we raised his child, threw himself on the ground beside her, covered her face with passionate kisses, and bathed it with floods of tears.

“She will live, my doctor, my Zillah will live—say that my darling will live! A hundred doubloons if, with Jehovah’s blessing, your god-like art saves her precious life!”

“I will do my very best, Don Enrique,” said I, “trust me for that; but send at once for Chamberlayne, he is our Jamaica Astley Cooper; I cannot, single-handed, accept the entire responsibility of the case. Who will ride post haste to Kingston for Chamberlayne, and bring him to Buena Esperanza?”

“I am your man,” answered the Major; and he was away at a hand-gallop with the very words in his mouth. Meantime, in the same way in which Zillah de Léon had been raised her gallant preserver had been got up; and now he stood at my side bruised, bleeding, exhausted, but plucky and cheery, and thinking less of his heroic deed than any one around him.

“I could not say much; an Englishman, whether in his joy or his trouble, is a reticent, undemonstrative

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species of the *genus homo*. Not so, however, our Spaniard. He clasped O'Sullivan round the neck, drew him to his breast, kissed his hands and his cheeks, and lavished upon him every superlative adjective of admiration and adoration his language is rich in.

"It is enuf, Senhor, quoite enuf; indade, jist a leetle too much in regard to the lip sERVICE. Howivir, oi'm overjoyed that God has made me so far instroomental in saving that pretty colleen of yours from being aten (eaten) by the John Crows" (a sort of carrion vulture). "Come, let's be taking her to the estate, Vernon."

By the aid of stick and withes and bamboos, O'Sullivan and his sapper soon converted the canvas sacking into a rough-and-ready stretcher, upon which we laid Zillah, and began our journey to De Léon's coffee estate, at a higher elevation, as I said before, of the mountain chain.

During our necessarily slow and toilsome march O'Sullivan whispered in my ear,

"Vernon, niver have oi sane (seen) features more loike those of an angel than there" (pointing, of course, to Zillah). "Ye'll bring all the meesteries of your craft to cure her, if ye can; oi feel that her loife will be as precious to me as to that disconsolate Don there —more so, indade."

"How to you, Charlie?"

"Did ye niver, in the coarse of your experiance, come upon a case of luv at furst sight? If not, oi'll tell ye a saycret—ye see one now!"

"Burke it, destroy it in the grain before it has time to germinate and grow. Putting aside other difficulties, there is the insurmountable one of creeds; you, one of Padre McCarthy's flock; she, probably a pet lamb of the synagogue, where the venerable Rabi Lopes

officials. Don Enrique—supposing even that Zillah recovers, which indeed is problematical—would never consent to such a co-mingle of tenets. I know these Jews well; the girl herself, likely enough, would be the strongest objector. However, there is lots of time, O'Sullivan, for thinking of such matters; just now it is a question of the unfortunate child pulling through by the skin of her teeth, as they say."

We had now arrived at De Léon's plantation. How lovely and prosperous it looked! the coffee-bushes of its fields overburdened with the ripe scarlet berries of their crop; its pastures rich with the thick, tall, green Guinea grass; its cottages and huts nestled among fruit-trees and palms; its "great house"—a generic term for every proprietor's dwelling on a Jamaica estate—large, pretentious, and embowered within gardens and shrubberies and orchards. And through all these indications of industry and wealth, and into that mansion of luxury, we were bearing the semi-lifeless and mutilated body of its young and beautiful mistress.

Zillah in her chamber, and Sapper Jones's ready hand available in carpenter's craftwork, no difficulty was felt by me in getting surgical appliances shaped and made; so that before the swell surgeon put in an appearance, the fractures had been set and everything done. All was *secundem artem*, he was pleased, patronisingly, to say; the concussion of the brain was the injury entirely to be dreaded; a certain line of treatment was to be adopted; he left the case in my hands, but would return from time to time to watch it. Then with a small rouleau of doubloons in his pocket he returned to Kingston.

But why dwell too much upon this the professional part

of my story? Suffice it to tell that early on the morning of the third day of the accident, to the unspeakable joy of her father and myself, my patient evinced a slight glimmer of returning consciousness; that after a while this became more perceptible and decided; and that, thanks to the admirable care she received at the hands of Miss Gloxinia McIvor, a lady of mature age and mixed Scotch and African blood, her nurse—there are no kinder or better ones in the world than the coloured women of the West Indies—complete intellectual restoration was the happy result. As for the broken bones, they were but a question of time; youth and a sound constitution would put those osseous structures all square.

I have said that the young Jewess was the fairest maiden I ever cast eyes upon; I must add that during an attendance which extended over many weeks I found her to be the most gentle, patient, amiable, simple, and pure-minded creature the Almighty ever put breath into. Her cheerfulness, her resignation to confinement and pain, her piety, after the manner of her faith, were lessons for anyone to study, and her gratitude to her doctors for all their care and attention was worth more, much more, than the liberal gold of her over-elated parent. She spoke English perfectly, but with a foreign accent; she had picked it up during a lengthened residence in London.

Many a time had she begged me to tell her the story of her rescue, of which she recollects no more than the fact of her pony rolling over the precipice; and many a time did she, like Desdemona, “seriously incline” to hear it. Her expressions of admiration for the gallantry and courage of her preserver were not much shown in words, but I could mark her eyes

brighten, her face light up with pleasure, as I gave my oft-told tale. O'Sullivan, of course, had not been permitted to see the young lady while yet an invalid, but don't suppose that over and over again he had not visited the estate to inquire after her ; indeed, his pony, like mine, must have been sick and tired of every inch of the road from Stony Hill to Buena Esperanza, and must have often wondered why they were always going there.

"Oi'll be roiding wid ye this morn, Vernon," he used to say. "Oi loike your company and your improving talkee-talkee ; and whoile ye're wid Miss de Léon, oi'll be taking a lesson in the unknown tongue from that brick of a governor of hers."

But besides his "roides" with me, there were many occasions when alone he would be seen to issue from the barrack-gates, and descend the well-known path to the savannah ; and then his comrades, spying him, would call out, "Hullo, Charley, off again to the land of Israel ? Away to get a peep at the Rose of Sharon ? How much longer to serve Laban for Rachel, eh, old chap ?" All of which harmless brother-officer "chaff" passed by O'Sullivan like the idle wind, which he regarded not.

Of course the enamoured gentleman's visits of inquiry were no secret to Zillah de Léon ; her father told her of them, ditto I myself, ditto Miss Gloxinia McIvor ; the reports of the latter personage extended and embellished for the young lady's delectation as thus :

"Miss Zilly, my child, dat buccrah (white) sojer-officer, him come 'gain dis day ; four, five, six time dis week him come. My fader, how him favour (likes) dis coffee 'state ! I believe him taking to coffee planter

business ; going be *book-keeper*" (the name of the junior superintendents upon a West Indian estate, upon the *lucus a non lucendo* principle).

"O, no, Gloxinia," says Zillah.

"Maybe him fond of ole massa self, and him habanner segar ? "

"It is very possible, nurse ; my father is the kindest and best of men, and his cigars are, I've heard him say, of Carvalho's best brands."

"Maybe, missy, he larning Hebrew for synagogue ? "

"Nonsense ! "

"Plenty, I sure : den him lub dat lily piccaninny him pull out ob hole wid de broken arm, de broken collar-bone, and de obcussion ob de brains. Hi, my fader, what fine ting for do ! jump off rock two hundred foot deep, and take girl he nebber see afore out ob big ribber. Sojer-officer too plucky."

"But, Gloxinia, Mr. O'Sullivan did not jump off the cliff ; and I never was in the river, was I ? "

"All de same, my child, near de ribber, in de ribber, all same."

"And I don't know that Lieutenant O'Sullivan, though, like a gallant hero, he saved me from the grave, cares for me, much less—loves—me."

"Hi, my patience ! den for wharra (what) him come ebery day and all de day long a-boddering here ? "

"I—don't—know—Gloxinia."

"You don't sabe ; but you can guess. My, how him hansom, dat buccrah !—red face, red hair, red whiskers, red coat, all red togither. Dey say him b'long in army to '*Gingerbeers*' ; but what de '*Gingerbeers*' is I no know. See, missy, just dis minute I meet him in portico ; he say,

"O, you're Miss de Léon's nurse, ain't you ?

“ ‘I ’as dat honour, sar,’ I gives reply.

“ ‘Den, nurse, dis bright new Mexican dollar is for you, and *dis* for your young lady. Gib it her wid my kind, my best compliment.’ ”

It was but a white rose-bud which Miss Gloxinia McIvor handed to Zillah ; but had it been a jewel rich and rare, the young girl could not have prized it more. The colour on her pale emaciated cheek heightened to crimson ; she gazed for a moment or two fondly at the flower, and then hid it within the folds of her dress.

But by and by came the day when Zillah was able to be removed from her room into an adjoining boudoir, and there to grant O’Sullivan entrance. As she reclined on a sofa, with the cool sea-breeze rustling her tresses and fanning her heated brow, as she lay there, her lips slightly parted, showing teeth of pearly whiteness, her delicate bosom panting and throbbing with excitement, every lineament, conceal it as she might, lightened up with the expression of honest and heartfelt gladness that her preserver stood before her, the brush of great Millais himself could not have done her picture justice.

My story has pretty well shown that O’Sullivan was a man of some resolution and mettle, but when he stood before that delicate and tender-aged maiden no white-liver poltroon could have seemed more cowed and abashed.

Presently, however, he screwed his courage to the sticking-point and spoke. (Again I shall dispense with his brogue.)

“ I am more happy, Miss de Léon, than, perhaps, you give me credit for to see you well, or nearly so ; and to think that I have been chosen as one poor aid to such restoration is, indeed, unspeakable joy.”

She uttered not a word ; her eyes filled with tears ;

but she held out her shapely hand to give him greeting.

He took and pressed it for a moment between his own.

“Mr. O’Sullivan,” said she, after a moment’s pause, “how can I find words to express my heart’s overflowing thanks and gratitude for that which you undertook and achieved for me—*me* the daughter of a despised and hated race? To save the life of one unknown to you even by name you narrowly risked your own—dear, Dr. Vernon tells me, to a widowed mother in England. I am but a poor friendless, motherless girl, a stranger, too, in a strange land; but O, had I died—as died I must but for your chivalrous daring and stalwart hand—the earth would have soon closed over the head of one very dear to me—my father. How can I, how can he, ever repay you?”

“Zillah!—pardon my presumption, my untimely abruptness, but I must be honest and straightforward with you, cost what it may. From the moment when I took you in my arms and placed you in that litter until now I have never ceased to think of you, to dream of you, to pray for you, and—ask—Vernon—to speak of you. In the depths of that gorge where I first saw you, crushed, bleeding, death-like, there my heart went out to you; with you, Zillah, it will be always. O dearest! my life, my love, give me yours in return; that is the only guerdon I need, the only one I will accept.”

“I dare not, I must not,” said Zillah; “but the same uprightness and honesty you have measured to me will I mete out to you, unconventional, unmaidenly as it may seem. Listen! As in hours of sleeplessness, sickness, and agony I lay upon my bed, my thoughts

have been always with, ever of, you ; and, strange as it may seem, I have been taught to love you so fondly, without, until this moment, ever seeing your face."

"O, Zillah ! "

"Stay ! But as I lay and thought, and been taught, so I have known that, beyond the love to a dear and valued brother, mine for you could never extend ; the sacred name of wife, the honoured one of husband, between us can never pass. We are of opposite faiths ; with you Messiah is, with me He is to come ; how could a union with two such contrary beliefs ever be blessed ? Besides, my father would never consent to it ; he is firm, bigoted, if you will, to his creed ; and even yet more, ever since I was six years of age, he and my uncle De Castro arranged that I should marry my cousin Manuel. Take that which I may freely, and without reservation, give you, the devoted affection of a sister. Let us part ; never see me again, and Eloihim bless and preserve you unendingly."

"One question, Zillah ; and, on the honour of a soldier, if the answer be against me, I will retire, and neither urge nor disturb you more."

"Say on," she whispered.

"As for our different faiths, I have known some loving ones get on well and happily together, tenets notwithstanding. Not to be frivolous, there is Jessica the Jewess and Lorenzo the Christian, whom Shakespeare tells us of ; so let that hindrance pass. In regard, though, to this betrothed cousin of yours, has—he—had—your love ?—that's the question."

"No ; how should he ? He is in Costa Rica, and I have not seen him for fourteen years—since, indeed, we were big boy and small girl together. Our intended

marriage is one altogether of convenience—to keep the money in the family, they say."

"Hurrah! Three cheers for Manuel de Castro! May he long remain in Costa Rica, and his shadow never grow less there! Zillah darling! Jewess or Moslem, Parsee or Gentoo, Charley O'Sullivan will have you for his bride. Adieu, *mia carissima, viva usted con Dois*, as your good old pater has taught me to say."

And now my tale draws to its close. As O'Sullivan, all "nods and becks and wreathed smiles," came from Buena Esperanzo into Stony Hill Barracks, I met him.

"Precious bad news, old fellow," said I. "I am ordered off to Falmouth on the other side of the island, and am going instanter. Had you remained ten minutes longer studying the Talmud, I should not have seen you."

We shook hands, and parted; and such have been the vicissitudes of our military lives that we have never met since. But I know that Charley married the girl he saved and loved; for one day I read in the *Kingston Chronicle*:

"By special license of the Registrar-General, Charles O'Sullivan, R.E., to Zillah, only child of Don Enrique de Léon," &c.

Whether the young lady was converted to Christianity; whether O'Sullivan became a proselyte to Judaism; whether Don Enrique was induced to accede to the marriage, or whether the young people were wedded without it—for

"Love is a god,
Strong, free, unbounded, and, as some define,
Fears nothing, pitith none;"

or in what manner of way the disappointed Manuel received his *congé*, deponent sayeth not, for he knoweth not.

THE STORY OF A BLANK ENVELOPE.

IT was nearly four o'clock. A deplorable, hopeless day it had been since morning. The drenched miserable trees looked like phantoms in the fading light of the November afternoon.

In the library of Stoke House, Mrs. Lyster sat knitting near the window, discussing her pet subject with her favourite guest. Arthur Lanesborough, "her dear Colonel," as his hostess called him, leant carelessly against the window; rather a handsome, graceful-looking man, about eight-and-twenty or thirty, with short, smooth hair, and large expressive dark eyes. His companion was the stoutest, bluntest-featured old lady that ever foreswore new fashions.

They were the dearest possible friends, those two—widely as they differed, in points mental as well as physical; and he was making her the happiest of women just now, by announcing that he "wanted a wife, and would she help him?"

What woman does not feel her vocation to be specially that of helping the angels in their pleasing occupation of making marriages? Mrs. Lyster spent her life placidly, in conjugating the verb to "match-make" in all its tenses, and an opportunity was now

to be given her to put forth her finest talents, and exercise her dearest hobby. Notes had been written, fatted calves killed ; and on this very afternoon the party was to assemble, from whose numbers, she fondly hoped, her dear Colonel might choose a help-meet. Damsels of sorts had been summoned—"on sight," as the tradesmen say—and the unconscious fair ones were even now on their way from Dumbleton Station, with their various parents and guardians.

Mrs. Lyster was in the middle of a long and slightly-disconnected harangue on matrimony in general, and sundry couples in particular, when the sound of approaching carriages announced the impending guests.

"Dearest and best," said Lanesborough, interrupting her, pleadingly, "I will be as good as gold. I will propose to them all, and they may toss up for me among themselves ; only, I beseech you, do not bully me, and, above all, do not expect me to fall in love, I will 'behave as sich' to the utmost of my power ; and if the young party will propose to me of her own accord, so much the better ; I shall be saved all trouble in the matter."

The indignant reply of his hostess was cut short by the appearance of the butler to usher in the new arrivals ; and Lanesborough made his exit by one door, as Admiral and the Misses Compton, Mr. and Miss Rowley, &c., &c., entered by the other.

Under the datura blossoms in the conservatory, Lanesborough stood smoking, till five-o'clock tea and the dressing-gong had taken place, and then he lit his candle and went to dress, saying to himself, that he didn't feel much like a man who was going to see his future wife that evening.

The guests were already in the drawing-room when he came down again, and he had scarcely time to distinguish those that were strangers to him from his acquaintances, before dinner. There was a stout woman in green, and her uneasy-looking husband in tight boots. There were three little girls in pink silk—the Misses Compton: tidy, well-dressed little people, with small features, fair hair, and rather red, thin hands. There were some stray men, and there was a tall girl in white, whose face he did not see, because her brother came and claimed Eton acquaintance, and he could no longer look about him.

At dinner, just across the table, he saw her, like a fair picture in a framework of fern leaves. A pale, sweet face, with dark, shadowy eyes, and brown hair wreathed with violets. What was it that came so suddenly back to him? Was it the subtle perfume of some lily flower? the wistful marble face of a statue? an old dream, long forgotten, that face recalled? Some strange, sweet memory it was, surely, that so strongly moved him. He forgot to reply to his right-hand neighbour. He refused *vol-au-vent aux huîtres*, and took mutton-cutlets. Something was the matter with him. Was he in love? In love! It seems to me that I am standing in the summer air, the breath of flowers filling my senses with a dreamy, wonderful happiness. I cannot analyse it; I do not question it. My heart beats quickly; my eyelids droop, but I am not weary! I could lie under a tree and gaze through the quivering leaves into the blue air above, all my life, I think.

They did the usual things, played at “letters,” or did crochet (the ladies, I mean); and the men tossed the ivory letters about, toyed with anything that lay

on the table, paper-cutters and little boxes, and secretly longed for the smoking-room.

Her usual fate, Maud Rowley felt it. The only man she could have cared to speak to had not exchanged one word with her. She sat musing in her arm-chair that night over this her fate, and made profitable reflections for future use.

He also, in his arm-chair, sat and thought that night, the window open (in accordance with the uncomfortable notions of his sex). The candle flickered, wasted, and went out with a puff, while the chintz curtains blew about impulsively in the rainy wind. He did not heed the candle; for between him and the fire there rose a white, fair vision, with deep, soft eyes, and he was coaxing it to remain, recalling, as in a dream, the touch of her dress, the faint scent of the violets she wore, the shy, sweet tones of her voice, a little hesitating and uncertain in her words.

It did not occur to him that he had not spoken to her.

When the fire was nearly out he got up, and perceived what havoc the wind had made at the toilet-table; how the little bottles were upset, and the razors, and the studs, and the heap of letters had all been blown down. He resettled them, and shut the window, without losing the thread of his thought.

"The keeper will be at the door at eleven," Mrs. Lyster announced at breakfast next morning. "Tomorrow you will like to hunt, I suppose, but to-day the meet is too far off. The home cover," she added, confidentially to Lanesborough; "I shall expect a goodly bag. At eleven, then," she repeated, as she marshalled her ladies into the library, where she meant them to spend their morning. She provided them with photograph books, and tapped the deposits of crochet

and worsted-work on the tables, signifying thus to them how they might employ themselves till luncheon ; and Lanesborough, after some vague wandering up and down stairs, and searching amidst the hats in the hall, submitted to his fate, and joined the other men outside, they, in due time, setting forth to covert, and seeing no more of the ladies till dinner-time.

Is it not one of the instances—so many, so little appreciated—of the powers of feminine endurance, that ladies will pass without complaint hours of such unutterable boredom—boredom under which men would fret, complain, and at length rebel ?

Till seven o'clock ! All day long shut up together, and in their best gowns, too !

Can we wonder if they talk about bonnets, are spiteful, and have five-o'clock tea ?

It was literally all day at Stoke, for the gentlemen, on their return from shooting, being regarded as the embodiment of muddy boots only, were banished from polite society to seek lower regions, which the soiled garments could neither injure nor offend. With his feet on the fender of his own room, Lanesborough sat in the indolent, delicious half-hour before the dressing-bell sounded, and in dreamy, comfortable position of body and mind, looked at the sliding-panels in a magic-lantern that his fancy held up before him. A future life spread itself out for him ; a picture of home happiness, pure and delightful ; a fair, blank page, for him to fill with golden characters, wanting but one small word to stamp it. Alas ! that little word “if.” It has a fate wrapt up in it. On an “if” hangs often-times a heart ; behind a five-barred “if” one may stand locked out for life. A small word, truly, but bearing a mighty meaning.

The bell rang. It behoved him to get up and dress, to attend to certain rites destructive to day dreams, and which, being accompanied by some personal discomfort and fatigue, disturbed and irritated the course of his reflections.

"She will send me in with some horrid old wretch again to-night. I know she will: or with Compton No. 2," he said, as he struggled with his collar-button.

"Ah! I have a dodge!" (the button was triumphantly squeezed into its hole): "I know a dodge!" He finished his toilet, and went down complacent and content.

"Let all things be done decently and in order," was the precept most dear to Mrs. Lyster; and the adjustment of guests at a dinner-party affording much scope for the carrying out of it, was by her greatly studied and seriously performed—performed, namely, as follows.

To the Bashaw of Two Tails (he of three tails being appropriated to herself as hostess) Mrs. Lyster sent the Admiral, with, "You will take in Lady Somebody, dear Bashaw," Lady Somebody being duly indicated. The door is thrown open: off sets the Admiral with Mrs. Three-tailed Bashaw, followed by he of two tails and his charge. Then, in a clear voice, Mrs. Lyster would say, "Mr. So-and-so, ahem! will you take in Miss Somebody? Mr. Somebody, ahem! will you take in Mrs. So-and-so?" The ahem being a sort of make-ready before presenting arms.

Now Lanesborough came in a little late on purpose, and stationed himself behind the sofa on which the young ladies were seated: behind, also, Mrs. Lyster.

"Dinner on the table." Away went the Admiral. "Major Brabazon, ahem! will you take Miss Hughes?" A stout matron opposite gazed at Lanesborough with a

look that portended his impending fate. Now for the dodge. "Colonel Lanesborough—" Mrs. Lyster paused a little because she did not see him; and before the next words could be uttered, he had offered his arm to Miss Rowley, and was half way into the dining-room.

How the conversation began he did not know. He found himself telling her a thousand things about himself that he never told anyone; his tastes, his favourite places; the finest tones in his nature answering to her light touch. She listened with such charming, genuine intentness, her eyes deepening and flashing with sympathy or dissent, her sweet voice speaking with such delightful earnestness about her favourite opinions and books. It seemed as if they had only begun, when the signal was given, and the ladies left the room.

"I hope my young ladies mean to give me a little music," Mrs. Lyster said, when coffee had gone round: "we will have a round game presently, but I should like a little music first." So the Misses Compton were in the middle of a duet when the gentlemen came in, and Lanesborough dropped into the other half of Maud's *causeuse*, and took hold of the canoe puzzle she held.

He did not say much, but he was very happy. He was building the first story of his house of cards, and it stood beautifully: stood, as yet, with an *aplomb* that promised fairly, as such first stories do, when the materials are not brick and mortar, but the sweet fancy of love; when it is the second or third tier in the Spanish castle that will fall with a crash, and bury all that bid so well at first.

She played to him—to him only, it seemed to his ear—and he could have stood there all night watching

the answer of her countenance to the notes that rang so full and tender a sound to the touch of her slender fingers ; it was as if all her soul spoke to him in her music, and she played with her eyes bent on the piano, so that he could look at her gentle face without disturbing its equanimity.

“Now we will have pounce commerce, sixpenny pool. Come, Colonel Lanesborough, you get chairs, please.” Mrs. Lyster came bustling up, and gave him a poke, to awake him from his dream. “Come along ; sit there. Now, nobody talk, please ; silence, if you please. Miss Compton — there — between Colonel Lanesborongh and Major Brabazon. Miss Rowley, here—there—plenty of room : *I have no crinoline; now—now—there.*” The good woman hustled them into their places, and to Lanesborough the game was a weariness of spirit and an abomination, and he called down objurgations from his hostess and the Major of Artillery for the bad cards he threw out, and the other sundry evidences he manifested of an absent mind.

“How happy you will be to-morrow,” Blanche Compton said coaxingly to him, as he handed the bedroom-candles at the foot of the staircase.

“Happy,” he repeated. “I hope so—very happy.”

“Your dear hunting—”

“Ah ! my dear hunting, to be sure,” and he laughed.

“It is a thaw, they say—you will have a charming day, while we poor people mope at home.”

His eyes were fixed on the group half-way upstairs ; he did not heed her, so she repeated plaintively, “You will be so happy.”

“Thank you, Miss Blanche, as you wish me success,” he said, suddenly turning to her, and taking the small

hand she held out, he gave it a squeeze so vigorous as to leave a doubtful impression on her mind as well as a very indubitable one on her fingers.

It was a black frost next morning. Ground like a board—dull hard sky—not a chance of a run. Nevertheless Charles Rowley appeared in pink, and ate a hunter's breakfast—under protest. “Oh, he must go!” he said; “he had ordered his horses to be there; besides, he had private information from the clerk of the weather-office that the day would change.”

He had a letter to write before going out, and he came into the library and made much ado with the young ladies at the big writing-table before he was comfortable.

“Now, this is what I call a well-regulated house!” he exclaimed, when all the paraphernalia was duly settled close to his hand; “I like a table with everything one wants. Do you know, Miss Compton, that when I want to write a letter at home, I have to walk all over the house to collect materials!”

“Oh, Charley! what a dreadful story.”

“It is as true as gospel, Miss Compton. My mother is an excellent woman; but she has no more idea of comfort than a waterspout!”

“Don't believe him, Miss Compton. There is everything in the little room, you know, Charley; only you never go there.”

“Yes; an inkstand with no ink in it; three pens with one nib between them; and if you take up a sheet of paper, you discover a memorandum about mutton on the other side.” There was a general laugh, and Maud told him that it did not much matter whether he wrote at home or not, since no one could read his letters.

"My handwriting? a very good hand—a fine, manly hand," he said, beginning his letter at last, and holding up a few words as specimen. "Horrible!" everyone said, except Emma Compton, who maintained that there was some character in the scrawl. A small discussion ensued on the exhibition of individual character in handwriting, and someone proposed that "each should write a few words, and send the result to Mrs. What's-her-name, in London, who tells your character—would it not be fun?"

So they all wrote but Maud Rowley, and when they teased and entreated her—Lanesborough more especially begging her to do so—she fled from them and took refuge in a far corner and a picture-book. Thither presently Lanesborough followed her. The others had sunk into quiescence—Charles Rowley had gone to hunt; Major Brabazon was deep in the "Saturday," and the Comptons in crochet-work.

"Why would not you let me see your handwriting?" Lanesborough said, when he had found a place beside her on the sofa.

"I write a bad hand."

"What does that matter—you were not afraid of that?"

"I don't know—I am silly about those things. I think, you know, that if all sorts of horrible qualities came to sight by my handwriting, I should not like it."

He laughed a little. "That would not prove their existence, would it?"

"I don't know; it is like having one's fate foretold."

"You are superstitious?"

"Am I? I will tell you what makes me think of those things as I do. When I was little, I was told that my garden—we had each a garden—would be a

type of myself; of my heart, you know, and my life. Well, I dug and dug, and watered, and planted things, and nothing grew—nothing but some weeds and a gooseberry bush that couldn't help itself." Her voice faltered a little, half laughing, half tearful, "I grew quite to dread my garden," she said, and put up her hand to her face like a child, to hide the colour that spread over it.

"Nothing but weeds," he repeated, looking very tenderly at the little hand; "poor little garden, there must have been a hole in the fence."

"Oh, yes!" she said, "quite a little hole; but the rabbits got in, you know." A great clear drop fell on the picture-book, and Lanesborough felt impotently savage with the "somebody" whose insinuations had caused the tear.

The party was to break up. The last evening had come. Lanesborough followed Charles Rowley to his room, and took up his position by the chimney-piece, under an acknowledged sense of inspiration from warmth in his rear.

"Do you go straight home from here?" he asked.

Rowley was hunting for a cigar, and had donned shooting jacket.

"Here is a famous one—have it?"

"No, thanks."

"Eh! do we go home? yes, I believe so—straight home."

"I shall be in your part of the world this winter myself. I shall come and have a look at you if you have no objection?"

"Delighted, my dear sir—very glad to see you."

"Your people—your father, won't object, will he?"

"My people?" a dim idea began to dawn on Rowley's mind. "No, to be sure they won't. I'll tell you what, you shall come and shoot—the covers have to be shot some time next month. We've place for a gun;—not Suffolk pheasants, you know, but very fair wild shooting."

"Thanks, thanks, very much—never mind about the shooting so long as I may come—I should like to be introduced to your father—anytime, you know, that suits."

Lanesborough stood still playing with the match-cases, and Rowley, after lighting his cigar, and offering another, asked where he was to be found.

"At the Crown Inn, Barkham; I shall be there for a month or so; any time after next week a letter will find me there; or if I go away it will be forwarded. You will not forget—Crown Inn, Barkham!"

"No, I sha'n't forget; I shall write some time—some time. Let me see, we shall shoot the covers about the 25th. The 25th of this month. Yes, I think so. Will that do?"

"Perfectly well, thanks." Lanesborough was silent for a while, his thoughts roving in a meadow of happy fancies, till, perceiving that his coat-tails were on the verge of roasting, he started, said good-night, and went to his own room.

"Delightful day, yes—quite warm," he replied next morning, when Miss Compton bid him a plaintive good-bye; he was awfully "distrait," and did not hear a word she said, and he never said good-bye at all to poor little Miss Blanche; whereas she was considerably impressed with him, and possibly from an instinct of unattainableness, had set part of her small affections upon him.

Everybody was going away—he went to the door of the omnibus and stood there, saying nothing, and holding to his lips the bit of myrtle that Maud Rowley had stolen from the conservatory. Maud had nothing to say either; just as they were about to start, he said, “Your brother has asked me to come and see him, may I come?”

“We shall be delighted to see you,” she said; colouring a little.

“That means that you do not care whether I come or not?”

Maud’s colour rose till her face was one blush, and she held out her hand for the myrtle.

“You will show me the little garden?” he said.

“Yes; but it is bare just now.”

“Will you plant this, and see if it will grow?”

“Would it grow?” she asked doubtfully.

“That is just what I want to know, I hope it will—you will tell me when I come?” he said.

“Now then, good sir, out of the way, please; we shall be late,” Charles Rowley said. He pushed him aside, jumped into the omnibus, drove off. Addio—bei giorni.

They were alone again in the library—Mrs. Lyster and her dear Colonel. An ominous silence prevailed on the subject of the departed guests. Poor dear old lady, she was not quite happy. “If marriages were made in heaven,” she thought, “the angels must know very little about it, if they don’t select Blanche Compton to be his wife.” Presently Mrs. Lyster said, “Admiral Compton asked me where you were to be found, if he wished to write to you. I said, I thought a letter would always find you at the club.”

"I shall be at Barkham for the next six weeks, I think."

"Oh! I fancied, perhaps, you might be visiting."

"If I am invited to the Rowley's," he said, rising, "I shall go there; but that depends on an 'if:' letters can be sent to Barkham, at any rate." There was no answer made to this, and Lanesborough in due time went out for rumination in general and a smoke in particular.

"Am I to write it?" Lady Rowley asked.

"I only know," replied her son, "that I never accept an invite unless it comes from the lady."

"Shall I say from the 25th to the 30th?"

"Oh, well, say on the 25th, and then he can stay or not, as matters turn out."

"Better not specify times and seasons. To-day is the 19th, isn't it?"

Lady Rowley left the room with her writing-book and a whole bundle of papers and bills.

Charles, still at breakfast, made an encampment of *de quoi manger* round his plate.

Maud was crossing the hall, and she picked up the fallen papers that marked her mother's track.

"Mamma," she said, coming into the drawing-room, "you have dropped ever so many, and here is the receipt that you could not find; I found it in the schoolroom."

"Oh, dear, how charming! Give it to me. I searched everywhere for it yesterday." Lady Rowley put some of her papers on the chimney-piece, some on the table, let a few more drop under the chairs, and sat down at her "davenport" with the bills.

"Can I write any of the invitations, mamma?"

"Thank you, darling, no; I think I shall have time for all. Are both the Knowlesses to come, or only one?"

"Oh, both, mamma, I think. Have you plenty of gentlemen for them? you know they like some."

"If all we ask come, there will be enough for them. But don't talk now, dear."

There was a silence, and then a gentle creaking of the door, and a head was put in.

"Please, my lady, could you speak about the preserves; and oh, my lady, I came about the girl from Thomson's."

Nurse and housekeeper demanded audiences. Lady Rowley left her desk, and started on a household raid, and Maud put down her work and gazed at the fire.

The children came in—two small girls and a boy; a meek governess came too, and a music lesson began, accompanied by rolling, tumbling, and occasional yells from the piccaninnies not under instruction. Lady Rowley came back, found the noise distracting, and carried her apparatus into the little room beyond the drawing-room—a room cold, fireless, uncomfortable, with thin-legged chairs, and cups and saucers, and illogical knick-knacks—a room seldom entered, and never used unless, as on the present occasion, as a refuge from disturbance elsewhere.

Presently Maud wandered in after her mother.
"Mamma, here is that luckless receipt again."

"Oh, dear Maud! Maud, what is his address?"

"Whose, mamma?"—her cheeks grew very pink.

"Colonel Lanesborough."

"Mamma, are you writing to him?"

"Yes, dear, he is to come on the 25th." Lady Rowley leant back, put her arm round her daughter's waist, and looked up smiling at her.

"Crown and Anchor Inn, Barkham, Lincolnshire, mamma."

Maud bent and kissed her mother, and left the room quickly. "Mamma is sure to write it wrong," she said to herself. She took an envelope, addressed it in her most clear hand-writing, put a stamp on, and brought it into the boudoir.

"Mamma, here is an envelope ready addressed," she said, and laid it beside the blotting-book, by the heap of notes already written. There was an invasion of the children; a message from the gardener; a petition from the governess. The luncheon bell rang. Lady Rowley left the letters, some in their envelopes, some lying folded ready to be directed, and was dragged by her olive-branches into the dining-room.

Maud was not hungry, but she helped potatoes and cut meat diligently for the youthful appetites. Just at the end Sir George came in. "If your letters are ready, mamma," he said, "Charlie's groom can take them into Bosworth; he is going about a gun, and it saves a post."

"Can I get them for you, mamma?" Maud said, springing up.

"No, dear, I will, if you will help Bobbie to some more pudding."

Lady Rowley disappeared, and a minute after Maude heard her at the door giving to the groom the letters one by one, reading the name on each as she did so. "Mrs. Knowles, Lord Tanton, Miss Amherst, Colonel Lanesborough, and a note to the apothecary."

It was all right then, the letter had gone, she herself had addressed it; there could be no mistake. "If only he comes!" she said to herself—"if only he comes!"

"That little room is *too* cold," her mother said, reseating herself at the table. "It must positively be shut up. The ink was frozen, and the windows let in a draught."

A murky cold day; frost in the air; the Barkham hunt trembled for the morrow. "Moon changes on the 22nd," one red-coat said to another. "This is the 20th; we had better try the gorse cover at once, we may be stopped next week." It was quite early in the afternoon, but the man whom the red-coat addressed had had enough of hunting; he drew his horse out of the crowd, and rode off by himself towards Barkham.

"Post come in?" he asked directly he got into the court-yard of the Crown and Anchor, where his servant was dawdling.

"Yes, sir. I put your letters on the table upstairs, Colonel."

Lanesborough went upstairs two steps at a time. There were three letters and a newspaper. He opened one after another rapidly, and without giving more than a glance to each, flung them down again; but the last he held some time in his hand, examining it inside and out, for it was an empty envelope.

The servant came in with hot water, and became officious about his boots. "Barnes," Lanesborough said, "did you get these letters from the postman yourself? has no one else touched them? did this one come with the others?"

"Yes, sir, they all came together. I took them my-

self from the post, sir. Three letters they were, sir. Dine in the coffee-room, sir?"

"No—yes. Never mind the straps, Barnes. I'll come down presently. There is a Bradshaw in the house, isn't there, Barnes?"

Barnes returned with the news that Bradshaw was *non est*, but a time-table was posted up in the coffee-room.

Lanesborough divested himself slowly of his hunting gear, stopping from time to time to look at and turn over the letter-cover that lay beside him, and then stare out of the window at the damp cocks and hens in the stable. Presently he descended to the coffee-room, where he found the time-tables, and perused them in company with a red-haired man of doubtful complexion, who could not make it out at all, and swore a little, *sotto voce*.

"Where do you want to go to?" Lanesborough asked, when the red-haired man's objurgations became audible, and his rather well-shaped white hand had slipped from the top of the list to the very bottom, only to recommence the ascent.

"To Bosworth," he replied, "I want to get there without going to London, and these confounded trains always vanish when they get to Blank Junction."

"There you are," said Lanesborough, pointing to the place.

"Ah, that's it; thank you. Now, let me see. Gets there at 6·30; time to get there for dinner. Query how many miles?"

"Where to?" asked Lanesborongh.

"To—what's its name—to the Rowley's place. I want to get there in time for dinner on the 25th. Do you know the distance?"

"No." Lanesborough did not know the distance. Lanesborough grew very concise in his replies; lost his own place in the train-bill, and finally went away and asked the waiter who that was in there with red whiskers.

"That was my Lord Tanton," the waiter said; "had been out on a roan mare yesterday; had had a tumble; was not much of a rider; was staying at Sir John Minton's hard by." So much confided the waiter.

So he is asked, Lanesborough thought, and he went upstairs again, looked over some letters, and found one from Admiral Compton, inviting him for December, and a bill for boots; threw them both into the fire, and stuck the third envelope into the glass over the mantelpiece. "Some hoax," he said, half aloud—"some hoax."

"Ben servire e non gradire—
Star in letto e non dormire
Aspettare e non venire
Son tre cose che fan morire."

Particularly *Aspettare e non venire*, at least so thought Maud Rowley. At every sound on the gravel, at every ring of the bell, at every footstep she had started, not for one day or one hour only.

It was dinner-time now; the gong had sounded; they were all in the drawing-room waiting for the announcement of dinner and of that guest who had not come—neither come nor written to say why he was not coming. Certainly wanting in manners, if not in something more important.

"Perhaps he was not there; perhaps it never went." "But I saw it with my own eyes," but there were five letters, not less, put in the post. But Lord Tanton had seen him at Barkham out hunting that very morning. No possible mistake, all agreed to decide. Maud

said very little about it, but the nervous beating of the heart at every closing door made her feel quite sick, and the eligible young squire, who sat by her at dinner, thought her very stupid, and much too pale to be pretty. He might come to breakfast; ah, yes, that would be it! The door would be open just as they had begun, and there would be "a thousand apologies," and then he would see her. Maud hid her face in her hands as she thought of that.

"We may as well go to covert," Charles said, after breakfast; "and if he comes you can send him after us to the ten-acre wood."

After lunch, the ladies went out driving and walking—finally met the shooters, and saw the game spread out on the sweep.

He will be at home by the time we go in, Maud thought; and she put her cold fingers to her head to allay its aching. Still he did not come.

It was a very pleasant party. Everybody said so. They danced one night, and they played at "curling." The Misses Knowles were very well dressed and agreeable; the young squires very much impressed; Lord Tanton very "affable;" Miss Rowley *so* nice, every one said.

Maud went into her mother's room about half-past six on the last day of the party. She was feverish and unwell; her head and her hands were so hot. In her room she had tried to stifle the unbearable restlessness by busy arrangement of her dress and trinkets; but it was in vain; blinding tears were beginning to threaten to overflow, and not only to scorch her eyelids, as they had done till now.

Lady Rowley was busy writing out bills of fare when Maud came in. The girl's heart sank. If she could

have gone and hidden her face in her mother's lap, and wept and spoken about it! "Mamma is always busy—always—always," she said in her heart, and stood by the toilet-table.

"Mamma, may I have some eau de Cologne for my head?"

"Yes, dear; to be sure. Is it *le saumon* or *la saumon*, Maud?"

"*Le saumon*, mamma, I think. Does anyone come to dinner to-night?"

"The Fitzpatricks come; and a Mr. Pringle, who has been shooting. I suppose we must give up all hope of your Colonel Lanesborough, Maud. What do you think?" Lady Rowley said, beginning a new bill of fare.

"I suppose so, mamma. Perhaps he was away somewhere, and will get the letter afterwards."

"I thought he told Charlie he would be there on purpose?"

"I don't know, mamma," Maud said, in a husky voice.

"I thought it would have been so nice for him to have come here," Lady Rowley said, after a pause, in which she revolved sundry ways of evincing her sympathy and disappointment. "He was very nice, was he not, Maud?"

"Yes, mamma."

Poor Maud left the room. She could not say any more.

Poor dear Lady Rowley! It had certainly looked very like a son-in-law and a *trousseau*; but how could she care much about it, when Sir George was so very particular about the legibility of the *ménü*. And, luckily, the acquaintance had been of such short duration, so

little had been said about it to Maud, there could be no very deep impression. What a pity Lord Tanton had such very red hair ! Ah, there was a blot !

So the shooting party was over. The guests departed ; and he had not come—neither had come nor written.

“Why did the fellow ask to be invited ? ” Charlie said. Charlie was emphatic on the subject when his sister was not present. “If you do not put it into her head she will never think again about it,” he decided, with that perception in matters feminine for which brothers are so justly famous.

Lady Rowley felt her conscience smite her. Had she not written to sundry aunts in terms so vaguely mysterious that they could create nothing less than a certainty in the said aunts’ minds, and produce a shower of congratulations, now not quite acceptable ?

Maud went to the gardener, and asked after the welfare of her bit of myrtle. “Was it beginning to take root ? ”

The gardener was very sorry—begged pardon; but “the boy,” to whom had been delivered certain pots to clean out had, with them, cleared out the sprig of myrtle—had thrown the contents of all the pots away—the myrtle was lost. The gardener would give Miss Rowley every plant in the whole greenhouse—anything in the whole floral world, to compensate—he would, figuratively, flay alive the offending boy—the boy’s life should henceforth be a burden to him, if only Miss Maud would forgive.

Maud grew very pale. “No ! don’t scold the boy,” she said: “he didn’t know ;” and then she walked away. “If I had even the withered leaves ! ” her poor heart said. “But when a thing is lost ! ”

It was horribly cold. The train had been crawling along, stopping at every station ; and they gave no hot water on that line.

"When we get to Ely, will you ask for some hot water, Charlie ?" Maud Rowley said, in a starved voice.

They were going into Norfolk on a Christmas visit, and the grievances of the Great Eastern were pressing heavily upon them.

"Train stops for ten minutes !" shouted the guard.

Out jumped Charlie. Maud hobbled out, too, on frozen feet ; and after a desolate movement to and fro, in the way of the porter, she descried indications of hot coffee, and made her way to the buffet. She had petitioned for, and was on the point of obtaining, a cup, when, at a little distance, with his back to her, she saw Arthur Lanesborough.

With his back to her. But she had caught a glimpse of his face. Besides, does one not know the back of some people ? Charlie came up stamping, to warm his feet. "Charlie," she said, with trembling lips, "look there!"

He did look, scowled a little, and turned away. "Well," he said. But she only scalded her mouth, and had no suggestion to offer.

When she had finished her cup, and saw her brother impatient and cross, she wrapped her cloak round her and went back with him to the carriage.

Charles returned to the buffet, not quite decided what to say or do. Lanesborough was paying for his glass of ale, and started when he saw who was close to him. He greeted him (so Charlie thought) somewhat stiffly. So, in return, Rowley merely said, "How d'you do !" and walked away again.

"If he has any manners, he will say something about his non-appearance," he thought, as he went slowly back to the train, and grew very angry when he reached it and found he was not followed. He said nothing to his sister, but rolled himself into a human sausage with his rug, and was not specially gracious during the rest of the journey.

"Did I dream it all—was it all fancy?" she asked herself, very sick at heart.

The Norfolk visit was that most trying institution—a family gathering. Aunts and cousins of every size and hue met together *affichés*—to be very fond of each other.

Maud, as one of the many, had hitherto only shone with a borrowed light, as a key to that hero Charles.

Now, she took a rank of her own, becoming very soon aware, with tingling cheeks, of the sense of this her new importance.

Had she not set up an admirer—a lover—a *fiancé*, perhaps.

And with the sore smart of those days of waiting, of the unrecognised meeting at Ely still fresh—to parry the hints, the caresses, the significant sympathy of the relations, was very hard to do.

A grandmother died. They were all in deep mourning.

Charles set off to Corfu with some friends, the little governess went away, and Maud undertook to teach the small brother and sisters. It was a quiet winter, therefore, from all causes. In spring, too, they remained at home, not being London-going people at

any time, nor Maud one whose wishes made themselves evident in the household.

Spring passed, and summer. Weary, with perfumed, silent days, and sweet, clear nights to one. Weary, tenfold, with dusty, clamorous days, and dizzy, heated nights to the other of those two, between whom a cool, wide stream of separation was ever widening, voiceless, but irresistible.

The autumn came, clear and still, with golden fields and glittering skies. The children must have sea-bathing. Maud and her mother accompanied them to a new, breezy watering-place, where there were few machines, and no parade at all. Maud bathed in the strong green waves, and breathed the salt air, and felt that the weight at her heart was only the heavier for the effort she made to throw it off. The splash of the water, the rush of the falling pebbles, his voice ever sounding—sounding in her heart, haunted her. And by night, when the choruses of the Welsh boatmen floated in the moonlit air under her window, something strange and chill crept round her heart, close and subtle as the grasp of the seaflower, that drags the swimmer down to death, in the cool northern seas.

One day, in the full noontide sunshine, the children and Maud sat on the shore building mud-pies, for which she supplied round pebbles as plums; Lady Rowley, with a letter, came slowly towards the group, reading to herself, and stopped close to them, still perusing and turning her letter over.

“A letter from Aunt Anne,” she said, at last, looking at the third page of it. “There is a piece of news in it, Maud.”

“Read it, mamma,” Maud said; and her heart sprang up, she knew not why.

"Blanche Compton is to marry a colonel of the Guards—Colonel Lanesborough—he has six thousand a year, and will be Lord Langton in due time. They are all much pleased." Lady Rowley paused an instant, and then read the end of the letter, and walked on. Maud made no remark; she sat quite still; and when the children found that she forgot to hand them stones, they helped themselves from the store on her lap.

Who so happy now as Mrs. Lyster? The happiest woman in the world she deemed herself; nor made it secret that she did so. The bride-elect, the *fiancé*, the *trousseau*, the whole concern, she took under her most special charge. Only one small circumstance afforded her dissatisfaction in the matter—namely, the determined silence on the part of Arthur Lanesborough, on a subject which the good lady longed fully to understand and to discuss. He would not be congratulated on having taken her advice; he would not say why; nor, indeed, whether he had ceased to admire Miss Rowley. He would not talk about it at all.

"I am going to be married to Blanche Compton, and I hope you will come to the wedding," was the only announcement he made to his old friend; and though otherwise perfectly and admirably biddable by her, on that one subject he was obstinately reserved.

The wedding was to be in the end of October. In the beginning of the month, Lanesborough, having left the army, placed himself entirely at his bride's disposal, and was taken to a relation's house to be exhibited thereat, as well as at a county ball impending in the neighbourhood.

There was no proper ball-room at Bosworth—only

the room where the assizes were held. Big enough, and with a good floor, but unlovely in its outward, or rather its inward appearance, and having for refreshment room an apartment resembling a laundry in all save the wash-tubs. Much calico, pink paper, and ivy did what they could to distract, if not gratify, the eye in the ball-room ; and the wooden judgment seat was appropriated to the musicians. A crowd of shining waiters and damp-fingered damsels blocked the passages in all directions ; bland, uneasy stewards had arrived ; and the squeaking of the fiddles portended the opening of the ball.

“Shall you let me valse ?” Blanche asked of her future lord, when one of their party begged for a galoppe.

“By all means ; do anything you like.” And Blanche appealed to the company as to whether he was not an angel.

“How you sigh,” she said, as she sidled up the passage, on his arm. “Does it bore you so very much, you poor dear ?”

“Did I sigh ? Look here, I’ll put your cloak in there for you.”

“No, darling, thanks. I want just to see whether my hair is straight, and to get a pin.”

So she went into the cloak-room : and he stood at the door of the ball-room, and had his toes trodden on by nervous old Bosworth ladies.

At the sound of some voices he turned round, and was face to face with Lady Rowley and her niece Emma —whom he did not know, and with Maud Rowley—whom he did know.

It was the niece’s first ball ; and she wrote in her journal next day that, amongst other delightful events, a gentleman, tall and handsome enough for a hero, had

started on seeing her, so violently that he had all but fallen down. Whence Miss Emma deduced a great appreciation of her own personal charms.

The first waltz struck up as they entered the room, and the rush of feet, and blare of cornets and fiddles rendered no talking possible.

Maud sat down; the throbbing pain subsided. She could look round, and recognise the faces that she knew. "He might have shaken hands at least," she thought. "I am not to lose his acquaintance altogether, am I?" A strange confusion of fancies bewildered her—a sense of being somehow in fault—the reawakening of all those sickening miseries that she had thought were stilled long since. Stilled: yes, borne down—buried; and flowers of fragrance and of tenderness planted on their grave—as she had bravely set herself to do—during these autumn months. Her cross it was to be—her thorny trial, drawing tears of blood, it might be, but purifying her heart from all too absorbing interests—teaching her by how little store to set a human love so lightly lost.

Showing her, her own too quick impulse, too easy belief, in what she wished for, poor child! she judged herself the more hardly, that her heart said nay, and bled at such hard judgment. Meek she must be, henceforth, and gentle, only the more ready, with sympathy, to help the suffering, to forget herself. She had surely dreamt all the past—that winter's fancy had been but a mirage; fled now, and leaving only hot sand and stones behind.

So she had schooled herself, growing paler, perhaps, and thinner, with a depth of sadness in those sweet eyes—strange in one so young—but letting no outward sign escape her of the pain within.

People came and asked her to dance, Maud waltzed and galloped, and quadrilled, and waltzed again. An ensign in the Compton party was much smitten, became introduced, and being granted the quadrille, "after this dance" retired into a corner to worship in silence.

In the same corner Lanesborough was standing, excused from dancing on the plea of Blanche and a headache. The ensign poured his admiration into Lanesborough's ear, lamenting his own want of size and her popularity.

"Any chance of a waltz, did he think?"

"Confound them; why don't they keep in the middle!" the Colonel exclaimed, savagely.

"I can't tell; you had better ask her yourself," he replied to the ensign.

"Oh! how graceful she is—stunning!" pursued the youth, deplorably. "She is like a swan, and all the others like waddling ducks."

Lanesborough laughed so fiercely that the ensign did not think him good company, and left him to await elsewhere the blessed quadrille in store for him.

"You shall give me one turn, one little turn," Blanche's voice said, close to her tall *fiancé*, when the dance was over, and the first bars of the "Peri" floated on the heated air. She looked up with a glance, half sharp, half coaxing into his face, and slipped her hand within his arm. "You look so bored, you poor dear."

"I have been using you ill; have a turn now with me."

"A waltz," he said, without looking at her—"too charmed;" and he set off before she was ready, so that her little toes could scarcely touch the ground, and she had to cling to his shoulder.

Two whirls round the room, and then Blanche stopped

him, and laughing, breathlessly, pulled him out of the circle of dancers. She stopped close to another couple, Maud Rowley and her big, sandy-haired partner, Jack Gordon.

"How do you do?" Blanche said, holding out a hand very cordially across Lanesborough's.

"How do you do?" said Maud, and then she shook hands with him also.

"Such a long time since we have met," said Blanche.

"Yes a long time—almost a year."

"You are quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"We are staying in your neighbourhood, I think."

"You must come over to see all my pretty things."

"Oh, thank you! you are at Barnton, are not you?"

"Yes, such a dear old house."

Jack Gordon saw a gap in the teetotums before them, and told Maud that if "she was ready, *he* was." So they waltzed off, and Lanesborough took hold of Blanche's small waist, and whirled her off her feet till the dance ended.

"Do you mind stopping," Maud had said, and Gordon stopped instanter, and piloted her out of the crowd.

She stood quite still, and held her fan so tightly, that the handle bruised her fingers; her heart was beating with loud, violent throbs, that shook her, and took away her breath; a strange weight held her eyelids, she could not raise her voice to ask for a seat, and she felt as though she must fall.

"Too hot, eh?" Gordon said, holding up his chin, and fanning himself with his handkerchief. "Awfully hot, and they push so, these people; come and get some tea or something."

"Wait one minute," she managed to say. He looked at her, but made no remark; till, touching his arm, she signified to him that he could move on.

"Awfully hot," he repeated. When they reached the quasi laundry, he got a tumbler full of wine and water—particularly wine—and stood, good-humoured and unobservant, while she drank it. He was a capital good fellow Gordon; utterly undiscerning—the best possible companion for a susceptible young lady; and being hungry and thirsty, he went to the supper-table, while Maud, with shaking cold limbs, and filmy vision, sat in her corner, and wondered what was the matter with her.

"All right again?" he asked, when he had eaten and drunk to his satisfaction. "Eh? no—not quite, I see. Take some more stuff. No? well, salts then, smelling bottle; don't faint, you know." From a stout dame in pink satin, he procured a fat bottle of benevolent outside, and pungent contents. "There now—do you good, eh?" Gordon said, much pleased, when after a few faltering sniffs Maud looked a degree less white, a tinge of colour came, and a look of life in her eyes, and she was better.

"By Jove! I am engaged for this," Jack exclaimed, perceiving that the "Lancers" was going on; "and there's the young woman, too."

"Never mind me," Maud begged, "I will stay here; my partner can come for me if he likes me; I am quite safe."

"Oh! well then, perhaps, do you know, I'd better go; she'll swear so, you see, if I don't appear." He nodded confidentially to Maud, as he hurried off, and she stood by the door and looked at the dancers.

As she moved aside to let some people pass out of

the supper-room, her dress was trodden on, and looking up to ask the culprit to remove his foot, she perceived that it was Lanesborough. He saw her at the same moment, and he apologised stiffly, and gave her a pin to repair the damage committed by his foot. She pinned the rent together, and said something about the crowd, and long dresses—something stupid enough; but that broke the ice, for she was resolved to speak to him. “Are we not even to be friends—acquaintances,” she said in herself; “have we quarrelled?” she looked at him when he turned to bring her an ice, and she saw that her first impression was just, that his face was changed, hardened with deeper lines, and an expression in the eye that she had not seen when they had known each other last year.

They stood at the chimney-piece, a little behind the door.

“Are all the Miss Comptons here?” Maud asked.

“Yes; no—Emma is not here; only Annie and Blanche,” he added.

“Have you been hunting, yet?”

“I beg pardon.”

“Have you been out with the hounds, yet?”

“Hunting—oh!—I—no, not much, only once; it is too early, rather.”

“You have been going about, perhaps, travelling?”

“Yes, I think so: I have been abroad, at Spa.”

“Were you abroad last winter?”

“Last winter? no; I was in Lincolnshire—Barkham.” His tone was unmistakable in its haughty surprise.

Maud’s hand shook so that her spoon fell.

“I was not sure, I—” she looked up for an instant,

and saw his face flush and his lip curl as he bent to pick up the fallen spoon.

"Has Blanche taught you to answer letters?" she asked, in what she meant to be a bantering tone; but her heart was in her throat.

"What do you mean, Miss Rowley?" he said, giving her back the spoon. "I did not know I required teaching."

Maud drew a long breath to gain courage. "You never answered one that was written to you last winter," she said. "Mamma was horrified when you had never answered—she invited you in her own hand. I—I hope you are penitent."

There was a moment's silence.

"I never got any letter from your mother. No invitation ever reached me," he said.

Then she looked at him, and a chill ran through her veins—his eye fixed her with so strange a glance.

"I addressed it myself—I saw it go—it was to ask you for the 25th, last year," she said.

"I never was invited for the 25th. No letter ever reached me from you."

"I gave the envelope, myself, on the 19th; we waited, and waited—"

She stopped, just conscious of the wail in her voice, the wild pain in her eye, that was betraying her.

He grew very pale and took hold of the mantelpiece with one hand.

"I never got it—I waited too; God knows I waited," he said, bitterly. "I never left the place—it never came."

"Would you have come?" she asked, at last, in a husky voice, when they had stood silent a little while.

"Come! would I have come? I tell you I thought of nothing else; you know I would have come."

"I thought, perhaps," she said, faltering, "perhaps you had forgotten—you did not care."

He laughed bitterly. "When I went to bed I dreamt of you; when I awoke you were there. All day, all day I was haunted. Do you think I could forget you? I tell you, to-night, when you came into that room, I knew it was you before I had seen you or heard your voice. I felt it."

She could not move, nor speak; she stood hearing as in a dream, while in a lower tone hurriedly he continued—

"I could not understand it. I met your brother somewhere, on the railway, one day, and his manner was so odd, I thought he meant to cut me. I saw there was something wrong. I thought it was a hint; and then I heard that there was someone—I was told so—someone approved of, that had been asked to the house. I considered myself dismissed."

Maud shook her head mechanically, and then they stood silent, and in one long look read in each other's eyes the joy, unutterable, lost to them; the pain, unutterable, to come."

Too late! One echo more to those words that have been ringing through the world since the day that the angel stood at the gate of Eden with his flaming sword—too late! And to her woman's heart it came differently than to his, this knowledge; for mingled in her was relief intense from the pressure of a long borne burden, with the new pain of a fresh wound. She had not suffered her love to grow as he had—to weave itself into sweet pictures in her mind. It had hardly put forth tender buds before they had been cut down—to

be pressed between the leaves of forbidden memory. No hope lived in her to receive its deathblow; rather had a stone been lifted off the fountain, and the stream had not yet found how narrow and stony its new channel must be.

It was otherwise to him. He was a man, and he was fettered—that was what sounded in his ear and throbbed in his brain. Fettered—and the rivets to be closed by his own hand.

“Oh, Miss Rowley!” a voice said close to them, “I have had such a search; this is our dance, I think.” The ensign, conscious in possession of a right, presented his arm.

He met a look he did not soon forget; but Maud did not answer.

Lanesborough said: “She is engaged to me,” and the ensign saw her walk away, remaining himself rooted to the spot, with a bewildered sense of catastrophe.

It was all a dream to Maud; she knew his arm was round her—she must have fallen else; and dream-like the notes of the valse wove themselves with the measured cadence of their footsteps into her misery and his. Never to be disentangled from it, those sad, sweet notes, now joyous, now tearful; but ever in floating measured time, that, like the tide waves on the shore, rose and fell unchanging—to them are agony—to all the rest a valse.

They had stopped, and were standing by a window, when Lady Rowley came up with her niece. She was a little fussy, not quite cross, but nearly so. “Where had Maud been? the carriage was waiting; it was very late; she must come at once.” Lady Rowley bestowed a look, half irate, at the tall partner, whom she

judged to be some flirting officer, subversive of punctuality and good manners.

"I will get your cloak, and you must follow," she said, and Maud tried to obey.

"Not yet," he said, and his breath came with a sort of shudder.

"I must go," she said, presently; "it is better to go at once."

"Stop,—" his voice was so parched she could hardly hear it. "I have something to say to you :" but he stopped, and the words were never said.

She drew him with her out of the room ; Lady Rowley cloaked and impatient gave her her bournous ; Maud put it on herself twice ; he had let it fall ; and then they stood one moment near each other in the dark, cold portico.

A link-boy yelled himself hoarse in behalf of the carriage, and old Sir Henry Wynn, the steward, was in a state of ferocious politeness, because theirs was before his brougham.

"Oh, no ! let him have the pleasure—charming."

"Well, pray—"

"Oh, no ! not at all."

He thrust Lady Rowley's petticoats in after her, and almost shut the door without waiting for Maud.

"One minute, Sir Henry !" Lady Rowley exclaimed, laughing. "My daughter is left behind."

"Ten thousand pardons, I'm sure. Charming ball, was it not ? I will take care of your dress. Good-night," and he shut them in with a bang, and told the coachman to drive on.

Maud leant her head on the window. Poor Maud ! The night wind touched her brow gently, and stirred her hair. It could not cool the burning pain within ;

but it felt like the tender touch of love. That love that had spoken through his voice to her very soul, that had seemed twin with her very being, now that it must be torn, riven, from her. The others slept. Lady Rowley snored a little ; Emma, the niece, dreamt confusedly, kicked off her shoes, and apologised half awake to Maud, who did not hear her. Her thoughts were in a throbbing chaos that would assume no form, not even that of misery. "Where was it, that letter he had never received, where, where can it be ?" she muttered. "Oh, patience ! wait, wait, surely one hour more—only one hour. A sob rose in her throat ; its sound roused her to the self-control she had nearly lost ; and she sat up, closing her eyes, and then opening them in the strained agony of impatience, "Oh, when should they arrive ! "

At last—

The mother and cousin lit their candles. Yawning with half-closed eyes, they bade each other good night, kissed Maud's cold cheek, and went upstairs. When they were gone, Maud turned back, pushed open the baize door that led to the sitting-room, and went in, through the dark drawing-room into the little room beyond ; where, as if it had been yesterday, she remembered her mother sitting at the table, and herself standing by her, and laying the envelope ready stamped and directed beside the blotting-book. All flashed across her memory, as she made her way by the dim light of her taper up to the writing-table. Her hand, her limbs shook convulsively as she put down the light and took hold of the writing-book.

An hour after she was still there, standing quiet and cold, with the flickering pale light of the taper on her face, for she had found the letter. It lay, as it had

lain long, between two leaves of blotting-paper, folded, dated, neatly—all ready to be put in its cover.

She had found, first, another folded paper—the long missed receipt she had brought to her mother that same morning, and then some bills, and then the letter; and she had read it through, and then remained standing, quietly, scarcely conscious of herself. The candle sunk at last into the socket, and went out, and then she raised her head, and drew breath in a long shudder. She groped her way out of the room, found a spark of light still in the passage lamp, and reached her room.

She did not sit up in her crushed ball-dress like a heroine; she struck a lucifer, lit a candle, undressed, and went to bed. But alone in long dark hours she lay, and did battle with her misery; and her broken fate was borne bravely back, though with a fainting, dying, strength, from crushing her.

She conquered. For when the day broke, and the dim cold light of a winter morning stole into the room, she rose, and destroyed the letter, so that she might never look at it again—so that her mother might never know that *her* hand it had been that had let slip the thread of her daughter's life.

Post scriptum.

There is nothing more to tell.

Blanche Compton's marriage to Colonel Lanesborough took place on the day appointed, and there were "no cards."

Catastrophes are improbable, not to say impossible now-a-days. When one's bride-elect has had twelve inkstands and ten paper-knives presented to her by her dearest friends, and has bought no end of fine clothes

for a *trousseau*, one cannot say that one has made a little mistake, and that one would rather marry someone else.

Nobody runs away—it is bad style. People learn to arrange any little mistakes of that sort very nicely ; nothing is known out of their own laundry of the state of the household linen ; and Mrs. Lyster told everybody that “It was the luckiest thing in the world that her dear colonel had got a wife to take care of him. How ill he looked ; all the effects of that horrid fever ; and was it not a pity Miss Rowley’s good looks should have lasted so short a time—she had promised to be so pretty !”

A DREAD CHRISTMAS EVE AT SEA.

“**M**ERRY CHRISTMAS!” Ay, how sweet the words sound when spoken by the dear lips in our own snug house at home, with its bright, cheerful look, and its cosy rooms all decorated with evergreens, and great, ruddy, roaring wood-fire that crackles in glee whenever the door is opened, and seems to say to the blustering north wind that rushing in causes all this excitement, “Come in, come in, and warm yourself, you poor trembling wind with the ice-struck breath; come in and be jolly for once in a way, for now is the time and this is the place—this happy, joyful, cosy Christmas parlour!”

Ay, ay, Christmas is indeed a merry and a jovial time for us all who have good houses over our heads, and good fires to keep us warm, and good meat and wine, and all manner of comforts to drive away all nasty thoughts of cold, and hardship, and want; but, oh! how different from those to whom it comes in misery, pain, and suffering; to wanderers in our own or foreign lands; to the toil-worn and weather-beaten mariners who sail the wintry seas; and to the many many thousands who have none to wish them a “Merry Christmas,” and to whom, if they had, the words would seem to be but mockery and bitter contempt.

Many a merry Christmas have I seen, thank God, and many more I hope to see ; but I have also seen, in my time, Christmas that was spent in hunger and thirst and killing cold ; Christmas unhoused, under a burning tropical sun, that mocked all efforts to avert its deadly strokes ; Christmas in a dreary hut hundreds of miles away from other human beings, when anguish and horror and dread were the only guests ; but saddest of all was a Christmas Eve spent in a howling tempest, on board a mighty but storm-strained ship, endeavouring by the light of a closed lantern to soothe the last agonies of a dying friend.

Shall I tell you the brief, sad tale, and thus urge you to turn aside for a moment in your career of pleasure, and thank your Creator for your present blessings, praying at the same time for those poor sufferers whose lot it is to drudge on in toil and care amid the raging wind and water ?

Some few years ago, then, it was my fortune to be returning home, after years of hard service in India, on board a hired sailing transport that carried the headquarters of my own gallant regiment. On the morning of Christmas Eve I was for orderly duty, and so had to turn out at six A.M., to relieve the officer whose watch was over at that hour, and came up on the poop shivering and growling, and in anything but a festive humour. The aspect of affairs on deck was not enlivening. The ship was straining under single-reefed topsails, on the starboard tack, and lying over very much from the force of half a gale of wind that blew from the S.S.E., accompanied by frequent squalls of half-frozen rain, that rendered the decks so wet and greasy that walking along them was attempted with considerable peril. Two men were at the wheel,

taking their orders from the first mate, who, clothed from top to toe in bright yellow waterproofs and sou'wester cap to match—his great beard, of much the same colour, dripping with wet—looked like some unknown amphibious animal, as he anxiously peered now at the binnacle and then, in the face of the driving sleet, hard to windward. Small groups of the watch crouched at intervals under the shelter of the weather bulwarks, or tramped moodily up and down with that peculiar rolling gait that is essential to preserve the balance in the pitching and rolling of a ship during a strong breeze. Forward, the steward, cook, and butcher were endeavouring to perform their respective duties, with the assistance of such volunteers as made it a point to stand well with those functionaries, who had it in their power to occasionally improve their favourites' rations with some little welcome addition. Everything looked damp, uncomfortable, and dreary, and I thought with a shiver of the contrast that would be afforded if I were suddenly transported to my own snug home in fair England, where, I well knew, all would be pleasant, gay, and comfortable on this morning, no matter what weather might prevail.

Independently, too, of the immediate circumstances, our position was anything but safe and assured. The good ship "Emperor" had encountered for the last ten days uninterrupted bad weather, and had lost many spars and much canvas, which she could ill spare ; and, in addition, the sky had been so very thick and cloudy that no observation had been taken, and we were in consequence in the utmost anxiety as to our true position on the chart. The "Emperor" unfortunately was built of iron, with her lower masts and heavier spars of steel, which had such an effect on the com-

pass that the captain and his mates were always mistaken in their computation of our whereabouts by the dead reckoning. The last observation had placed us fifty miles south of Cape St. Mary, in Madagascar, and it was now surmised that we must be running too close to be comfortable to Cape Lagullas, or to the much-dreaded Good Hope.

There was a good deal of illness on board, for the constitutions of many, enfeebled by the climate of India, could not stand the cold and hardship that we now experienced, and more than one hammock-enclosed body had been slipped over the gangway, while the storm beat in the faces, and unsteadied the legs of sorrowing comrades, who listened in bitter grief to the touching words of the burial-service. Altogether our anticipations of Christmas were most gloomy, and as the "rouse" sounded and the soldiers came tumbling up on deck, I could mark on the countenances of most a saddened and hopeless sort of expression, as they glanced hurriedly to windward, and perceived that as yet there was but little chance of the weather abating.

For myself there was an additional sorrow, that well-nigh weighed me down, in the illness, which I could no longer conceal from myself, and was rapidly bearing to a watery grave one who had been to me a companion and close friend during many a trying day. Frank Malton had suffered dreadfully in India from constant illness, which had gradually culminated in rheumatic fever, the never-ceasing pain of which had quite broken him down, and turned the blue-black hair and long beard to iron-grey, and this in a powerful young man not yet eight-and-twenty. The medical board at Bombay had offered to send Frank home overland, but he was in such pain that he could

not bear to be in the hands of strangers, and preferred to come with us, and take his chance of life or death amongst his trusted comrades; and I thought now, with a sharp pang, of how I had more or less induced him to adopt this course. For the last week or so he had been very much worse, the cold south-east gale bringing his sufferings to a climax, and Bissett, our doctor, hardly hoped that the poor fellow would survive over Christmas Day.

The morning wore on, and by breakfast time the decks had been swept after a fashion, the shivering women and children brought up, much against their will, to enable the men to clean thoroughly below, and roll up the hammocks out of the way. At ten o'clock the usual parade of all hands was held, and the men were drawn up in two ranks on the troop-deck, holding on by long ropes that ran from end to end, while we officers and the doctor staggered and rolled along in most undignified fashion, examining most closely into the cleanliness and appearance of every man. This very necessary duty over, I had a short time to myself, and went down to poor Malton's cabin for a visit.

Sitting against the door, I found Simpson, Frank's old Scotch servant, who, in answer to my inquiries, only shook his head, and looked in my eyes with a hopeless glance as he rose to admit me. Some days previously I had had the wooden berth in the cabin removed, and a hammock slung, to afford some slight relief to poor Frank's torments, and in this he now lay, only a stranded wreck of the fine, able young fellow he had once been. He was much exhausted, and very low from the almost total want of sleep, and the constant pain to which every roll of the ship added. He seemed

to be dozing when I entered, and it brought the tears to my eyes to see the pale face seamed and wrinkled from intense suffering, and with the grey hair and beard and sunken eyes of apparently a man of fifty.

"Is that you, Sam?" he asked, in a feeble voice, as I turned to withdraw; "don't go, old man, I'm not asleep—only dozing," he continued, as he opened the once bright eyes and looked up with, oh, such a sad, longing glance, while one poor, thin, and wasted hand crept over the coarse canvas of the hammock, and took mine in its clammy, feeble grasp. "I want to speak to you, Sam, before it's too late—and to ask you—oh!" he broke off, as a short kick of the vessel, as she suddenly dipped into a larger sea than ordinary, gave him a sharper pang—"to ask you to write very carefully to my poor, darling mother when—when all is over. I can't myself, you know;" this with a sad smile, as the idea seemed to tickle him; "but I want so to tell her, Sam, how sorry I am for all the pain and trouble I have given her, and to beg her pardon. I've been a bad son, I fear—a bad man—and I deserve all this and more; but, oh, Sam! if I could only live a little, to see her once more—and my darling sisters—my darling little sisters; and to kiss them, and to look on their dear faces before I die." And the poor fellow moaned with grief and pain, and the tears gathered in the large black eyes.

I soothed him as well as I could—spoke hopefully of his getting over this attack—of the chance of the weather breaking, and the pleasant sun coming once more to warm and cheer him—of this holy Christmas time, when all should be glad in the gladness of the world for the coming of the Lord, and of the hope and trust he should have in his mercy.

"No, no, Sam, it's no use ; I can't hope for life—I don't. A man knows when he's dying, and I know it now. It's not that that knocks me up ; God knows I am resigned to die, hoping in his mercy. Oh, Sam, it's not that upsets me ; it's thinking of what a wicked wretch I have been, when well and strong, and of home—and—and those I can never see any more—my poor mother, my poor mother!" and the weak voice died away in a stifled moan.

"There, like a dear fellow, now, don't excite yourself," I said ; "you know, Frank, it's not right, and we must hope and be patient, even if the worst comes. And your mother, Frank, your mother, you know, loves you, and will forgive any little wildness—there was nothing but that, and we are all liable to it—that ever you gave way to. I'm sure you have been a better son, a better man than any of us have been, and I only wish I was a quarter as good ; but now I must leave you for a little."

"Why ? Are you on duty ? Ah, I see your sash on," he said, as he noticed that mark of the orderly officer. "Well, come back when you can ; I want to say lots of things to you, and send some messages. And perhaps,"—this with a wistful look—"and perhaps you could read me some prayers, Sam, if you don't mind much."

"Oh, no ! I like it. And now lie as still as you can till I come back : I think the wind's lessening a little." My mind belied me as I uttered this hope when leaving the cabin ; and, indeed, on mounting to the poop I found that, far from lessening, the gale was undoubtedly on the increase.

I had but time for one anxious look at the lowering, threatening horizon, when the bugle summoned me to

the most unpleasant of all my duties—superintending the issue of the day's rations to the troops. Making the best of my way along the slippery deck, clinging to the rigging, ends of ropes, casks, and guns —now rolling away to leeward amongst the surly, scowling soldiers ; anon driven amidst a group of women, who sat cuddling their children for mutual warmth—saving myself from falling down the gaping hatchways in an almost miraculous manner, I at length gained the break of the fo'kstle, under which the butcher and his mates were holding on, and waiting my arrival to open the beef and pork casks. “ Go on,” was my brief order, as I secured myself in the weather rigging of the foremast, and prepared to spend an almost intolerable hour and a half.

The vile stench that emanates from a cask of junk or pork, when the top is first knocked off, is most overpowering, but to-day, somehow, it seemed worse than ever, and many of the orderlies were quite sick, as they staggered away with the rations of their mess to deposit them in the cook's coppers. The men seemed unaccountably depressed, and none of the sly jokes, minor witticisms, or larking humour, with which the issue of rations on a fine day was usually marked, displayed themselves, while, to make matters more uncomfortable, every now and then the vessel shipped a huge “ green sea ” that drenched us all thoroughly, besides washing numbers off their legs into the lee scuppers, whence they picked themselves up, swearing savagely at the hurts and bruises they had sustained.

This disgusting duty performed, I had to descend to the troop-deck, and visit the hospital—inspect every hole and corner amongst the men's tables and hammocks, to insure their perfect cleanliness—visit the

prison, and woman's quarters for the same purpose, and perform numberless other unpleasant duties that occupied much time.

"How do you find Malton to-day, Bissett?" I inquired, meeting the doctor below.

"Sinking fast, poor fellow," he answered; "it's all up with him, I fear. Indeed, I hardly think he'll live till night."

"Good God! Can nothing more be done for him?" said I, greatly shocked; for my mind was not prepared for so speedy a death; "nothing, at least, to alleviate the awful pain?"

"No, there's nothing more to do for him. And the pain will probably be deadened some hours before he goes off.—Now, stop steady, will you?" he continued, as he coolly slipped a lancet into a huge swelling in the jaw of a soldier, who howled again under the operation.

I hastened up, intending to go and see poor Frank, and read some prayers to him during the time that would intervene before the men's dinner would demand my presence. On the poop, surrounded by our colonel and some other officers, the captain stood, with the quadrant in his hand, with which he had been vainly essaying to "take the sun," and looking very much discomposed at his unavoidable ignorance of his ship's position in such a dangerous neighbourhood.

"This will never do, Mr. Chaplin," I heard him say to the first mate; "the breeze is rapidly freshening to a gale. Best go about, I think, eh?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the mate, "we'd better. The ship must be running close on to Lagullas now if the dead reckoning——"

"Damn the dead reckoning, sir! what's the use of

dead reckoning in an infernal old iron pot like this?—Oh, Mr. Dash”—turning to me—“I’m going to put the ship about; please get your watch to their proper places.”

“Call the watch! All others below!” I roared from the poop rail. The men instantly obeyed.

“Run for’ard, Mr. Chaplin, and see those lubbers handle the sheets smartly, will ye?” said the captain.

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the mate, leaving the poop and making his way to the foot of the foremast, whence his voice presently hoarsely bellowed, “All ready for’ard!”

“Ready about!” shouted the captain, followed by, “Helm a-lee!—Tacks and sheets!—Mainsail, haul!” and with two or three tremendous kicks that shivered through her whole frame, the mighty ship obeyed her helm, and her sails soon filling, bounded away on the opposite tack.

“I think he’s off his head, sir,” whispered the old Scotch servant, as I entered Malton’s cabin, when the above job was concluded; “he screamed dreadful when the ship tacked, and he’s been muttering ever since about his minnie.”

“Mammy, dear mammy, I’ll be good if you’ll not be ‘out’ with me. I will, indeed, mammy; and it was Rosey that pulled all your pretty flowers!” muttered the poor fellow’s plaintive, weak voice, as I looked into the hammock wherein he swung, lying on his back, and half dreaming, half raving. I thought it best not to disturb him, and sat down on the sea-chest, turning over the leaves of the prayer-book, to find something suitable to read when he should desire it. But now he was very quiet, and only moaned at intervals, or whispered to himself of things that had happened long, long ago, and which seemed principally to refer

to his home, and his mother and two dear sisters, who were never more to see that manly face.

Presently I was summoned to visit the men's dinners, and to superintend the issue of the grog afterwards—always a fertile source of dispute and grumbling—and I got quite angry over the senseless complaints the men made, which sickened, while they saddened more and more, my mind, already sinking with sorrow for my friend.

The wind had now increased to a regular gale, which whistled and roared through the straining cordage with a weird, unearthly sound. The ship was running under almost bare poles, the fore and mizen top-sails, close reefed, being the only canvas set; and yet, even with this small show of sail, she lay over so much that it was with the greatest difficulty I could make my way along the sloping deck, that leant at such an angle towards the raging sea that I momentarily feared we should be on our beam-ends. Four men were now stationed at the wheel, and it took all their strength to steer the ship. Most of the crew were aloft, furling the main top-sail, which flapped and fluttered in such a wild manner as threatened to jerk the hands off the ice-cold yard.

In the cuddy, to which I presently descended for dinner, all was confusion and dismay. Such of the ladies as had courage to leave their berths were crying and wailing with fright, and encouraging, by their example, the poor little children in their terror. My brother-officers were cool and collected, and endeavoured, as well as the terrific rolling and pitching would permit, to snatch hasty scraps of food. Above all the howling of the storm ruled supreme, interrupted every now and then by a wild scream from forward, and the

constant and dismal groaning of the pigs and other live stock, who added their melancholy noise to the turmoil. Regular dinner under these circumstances was impossible, and we could only hurriedly swallow such morsels as readiest came to hand, and could be most quickly disposed of. To add to the dreariness of the meal, now and again poor Malton's voice sounded from his cabin, in entreaty, in expostulation, and at times in fierce rage, as memories of early days and bygone events swept over his disordered brain.

When this miserable attempt at dinner was over, I sat for some time at the cuddy table, discussing with some of my more intimate chums our present situation, and the sad end to which Frank Malton seemed rapidly hastening. He was an immense favourite with our whole mess, and there was hardly one of us who had not had reason to be grateful to him for some actual service rendered. He had attached himself to all by the simple unselfishness of his character—a quality somewhat rare amongst men of the world—and now that he was going from us, nought but unmitigated sorrow prevailed. To me personally he was very much attached, and had at one time saved my life at the imminent risk of his own, while he had at all times displayed an affection for and confidence in me, which had gained him my heartfelt love. Wild he had been, as to which of us had not? but never to any great extent; and it was the thought of some youthful follies and trifling excesses that now disturbed the calmness of his dying hours. Manfully had he atoned for these early faults, and long before this grievous illness had made him its prey he had quite repented and reformed his life, and was known throughout the regiment for a sincere, practical Christian. This dreadful rheumatic

fever—of which the constant, never-dying pain cannot be imagined by those who have not seen its ravages—had attacked him first more than a year ago, and had soon pulled to pieces a constitution already sorely tried by the deadly climate of Central India.

“He is asking for ye, sir,” whispered Simpson, as he rolled against me in a sudden lurch of the ship. “I think he’s a bit easier, and don’t seem in such pain like,” continued he, as I rose to follow him; “maybe he’ll come round after all.”

“No hope, Simpson,” I sadly replied, as the words of the doctor recurred to my memory; and the tears welled up in the faithful servant’s eyes at my despairing answer.

“Ah, Sam, dear old fellow! I’m so glad you’ve come;—but I hope you’ve had your dinner?”

“Yes, such as it was, with all this rolling, and tumbling, and smashing of crockery,” I answered, trying to be cheerful, now that Frank seemed stronger and better than when I had last seen him; “you’re not in such pain as you were, are you?”

“Oh, no; not in such pain; that seems to be dying away,—and I’ll soon follow it. But I’m weaker, Sam; a good deal weaker.” Then, after a pause, during which he seemed to rest to gain strength, “Will you get some paper, Sam, and write for me to home—to my poor, darling mother?”

I soon got the necessary materials, and wrote, word for word as he uttered them, such a letter of tenderness as perhaps was never before written. A letter full of love and devotion, of repentance and sorrow for the few sins of his life that had caused that dear mother any pain, of hopes that soared above his coming watery grave; hopes of redemption and salvation for her, and

his two darling sisters, and himself; hopes of a happy meeting in that other joyful world, where sin entereth not; and hopes that their sorrow for him would not bear them down, but that they would think of him as gone to the everlasting abode of love and eternal intercourse with his Creator; while as the feeble voice dictated the last words the tempest raged and howled its worst, and the dark night came down in its fury and wrath.

The letter concluded, poor Frank tried to sign it himself, but was quite unable to do so, and lay back in the swinging hammock so exhausted that I feared his last moments had come. I called in Simpson, and while he held him up as well as he could, I managed to get a little champagne down his throat, which appeared to revive him considerably, and he found strength to speak, and begged of me to read him some prayers, or one of the psalms.

But now it had become quite dark, and while Simpson was gone to procure a light, Frank talked to me in a low, sweet voice, and gave me minute directions concerning many matters to be carried out after his death. "And, Sam, please go to my dear old home, and tell them all about me yourself. I could not bear them to think that I died alone and unhappy in this wild sea. Tell mother I was resigned, and died hoping only in my Redeemer; and give her, and my darling, darling sisters my last love. And, oh, Sam! don't forget me when I am gone—and you'll take care of old Carlo, won't you?" This was a favourite dog which he was bringing home. "There, there, don't cry, dear old boy," he continued in a tone of womanish tenderness and soothing that I may never forget; "don't, now; it makes me so sorry. Ah, it's so dark. Is it night yet?"

I told him it was, and that Simpson had gone for a light.

"Poor Simpson, he's as foolish as you in being sorry for me; and I'm so happy," he added, with a deep sigh of weariness, as he leant back, while I told him to lie still, and gave him a little more of the champagne. Presently Simpson returned with a large ship's lantern, which gave but a dull, yellowish light, and made everything in the little cabin look so weird and supernatural that the honest old servant was quite overcome, and retired to conceal his tears.

Then I opened the prayer-book and read such portions as seemed best adapted to the circumstances; read those grand words that teach us of the vanity and instability of this weary life, and of the glory and consummated love of that to come, the while Frank breathed heavily, and as one much wearied, muttering, "True, true," at those passages which affected him most, until at last he dozed off, and all was still for a while. Still, in that dim-lit cabin; but without the storm raged and howled through the rigging, and the good ship strained and creaked and kicked so desperately under the heavy green seas that struck her ever and again, and I feared more than once, from his immobility, that poor Frank was dead. But, no; occasionally I could see the lips move, as dreams or ravings of his home, and of India, and his life with us for years past drifted through his mind, and at times were uttered.

It was a dread scene that small cabin, and the recollection of it can never be effaced from my memory. I seem to see it now; the four white walls hung round with accoutrements and various other articles—here a red coat and sash, there his sword and revolver, sur-

mounted by the heavy helmet, a hold-all, a little shelf of books, and on either side of the small looking-glass that overhung the washing-stand two photographs—one of his mother, and the other of two fair girls, with Frank's own sweet, winning smile, that showed them to be his sisters. The floor was lumbered with bullock-trunks, boxes, boots, and the great sea-chest on which I sat, while, occupying the centre, swung violently to and fro the hammock, above whose coarse canvas sides was visible the thin, handsome face, channelled and seamed with the deep furrows cut by constant pain, and affording a fearful relief to the long, iron-grey beard, while the snow-white, transparent hands plucked nervously at the clothes; and over all the dull glare of the closed lantern shed a yellow, dismal, ghastly light.

Looking at my watch, I found it was nearly eight o'clock, and calling in Simpson, who was sobbing outside, I told him to call me or Dr. Bissett if there was any change, and went out into the *cuddy*.

The lamp swinging over the *cuddy-table* gave but a dim sombre light, and hardly rendered distinctly visible the faces of our colonel and some other officers, who, with the captain, were anxiously studying the chart. The face of the latter bore a peculiarly agitated expression, and it was evident that he was much more alarmed for the safety of his ship than he chose to say. From the cabin doors that opened off the *cuddy* many a poor lady's pallid face peered fearfully out, as if trying to get at the truth of our alarming situation; but on being noticed, was quickly withdrawn. Indeed, the conduct of the ladies was admirable, and they were quite calm and collected *now*, bearing out a theory I had long since formed, that women, when face to face

with real danger, are quite as courageous, if not more so, than men.

But this was no time for speculative theories, and as I followed the captain up on to the poop, I found that, unless prompt action was taken, or an immediate diminution of the wind occurred, a fearful catastrophe must ensue. The gale was now at its very highest, and the ship laboured and strained fearfully, and seemed to be unable to rise to the tremendous billows that ever and anon struck and swept over her with a noise as of thunder.

The captain was in a dreadful state. He talked of cutting away the masts ; but when he remembered that they were of iron, he seemed quite in despair, and at his wits' end. What a fearful Christmas Eve it was !

"It can't last, sir, it can't last ! One of those cursed iron masts must go soon, and tear the whole side out of the ship, or else she'll founder !" he bellowed in my ear, as we stood lashed in the weather mizen rigging. The only remaining sail—the close-reefed fore-top-sail—now split with an appalling crack, and was in a moment torn into a thousand ribbons ; and just then the mate sounded eight bells, and, from below, the shrill, uncertain notes of "tattoo," which the bugler tried to blow, were heard even through the awful din of the tempest.

I don't know how I got down, but presently I found myself on the troop-deck, and hearing from the precise sergeant-major that was all "correct" below. It was a strange sight that met my view as I looked down the long vista of the 'tween decks. Two swinging lamps, one at either end, only sufficed to dimly shadow forth the forms of the men who were standing, sitting, or rolling about the deck, and of those who were already lying in

their hammocks, that swung violently with every bound of the mighty ship. Occasionally a shrill cry from one of the poor little children, or a low moaning wail from a frightened woman could be heard, but otherwise all were quiet.

I hurried back, as well as the pitching would permit, to poor Frank's cabin, hardly expecting to find him alive. But he was; awaiting my coming with glaring eyes, that shone like electric sparks in the dimness.

"Oh, Sam! I have had such a pleasant dream," he eagerly said, as I entered; "and all the pain is quite gone, and I feel so strong! Is the ship quieter? I don't feel so tossed now, or hear the wind and sea so much."

I told him, God pardon me, that the gale was lessening.

"Ah, I'm glad.—And I dreamt of Christmas Eve at home—six years ago. Isn't this Christmas, Sam?"

"Yes, Frank, dear; think of Christmas, when our Redeemer was born for us," I whispered.

"Ay, Christmas Eve—Christmas Eve—I know, I know—and—" After a pause, during which he muttered to himself—"Oh, yes! we'll be so happy, sha'n't we; Rosy?—Where's Carry? Oh, I forgot; gone down to the lodge with mother;—and, Rosy, where's—oh, Sam, is it you? I thought it was mother. Was I asleep, Sam?" And so the dear fellow rambled on, raving and dreaming, and talking of home—always of home. He spoke most of Christmas—merry Christmas, as he called it, and talked of some happy scenes that had evidently deeply impressed his mind, and which had occurred when he and I were last at his dear mother's house, during the holy season, when all was mirth and joy and Christian gladness with us.

It broke my heart to hear him.

"Do you remember Carry and you," he continued, "falling through the ice? and how funny you looked, all wet and half-frozen, and mother made you go home and change; and it was cold, oh, so cold;—is it cold now, Carry? Let's go in to the fire; I'm so cold!" and he shivered all over.

I felt his feet—they were as those of a corpse. I made Simpson, who sat sobbing and crying like a woman, chafe them, as well as the swinging of the hammock would permit, and leant over to whisper, "Frank, dear, it's indeed Christmas-time, when Christ was born to save us,—to live, and die, that we might be redeemed. Won't you think of this, Frank?"

"Yes, yes; the Saviour is good—how good to me;—and at church, I remember, it was written up—all in green things and red berries—it was written—what was written, mother? I forget—what—where—oh, mother, read me that— Ah, God!" he screamed, with a most unearthly yell, as the ship seemed to jump under us, dashing the lamp to pieces—and a tremendous crash stopped my heart. Simpson and I were flung violently forward, and fell right through the thin door into the cuddy. The lights were all extinguished. The awful rush of raging waters—the mad howl of the storm—screams of terror and agony, and the dreadful clangling and clatter of chains and iron hammering against hollow wood—made the most hellish din I have ever heard. I thought the last hour was come.

"Hands, clear the wreck for'ard!" was bellowed through a speaking-trumpet; and recovering somewhat, I got up, and, with Simpson, re-entered the cabin.

No sound or sign of life; and the brow feeling cold and clammy with the dread sweat of death.

"Try and get a light, Simpson; I fear all's over," I hurriedly said, as I rushed out to see what, if any, assistance I could render on deck.

All was fearful uproar, confusion, demoniacal noise, and infernal darkness.

"Some of your men hurt I fear," said the first mate, staggering past me as I stood under the break of the poop.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"Fore-topmast snapped off at the cap: thank God! she'll ride easier now. But get some of your men up to help clear away the wreck."

I went forward, collecting a few men on my way. The mast had carried away, and come down on the deck, bringing with it all the top hamper—spars, rigging, and all. Piercing screams mingled with the clanging and clattering of the wreck, and I found that two men were killed, while many were severely injured—one of the latter having both arms broken and his skull cut open. I set such men as I could get together to work, under orders of the mate, and helped to extricate the wounded men, and to bear them below myself.

On reaching the hospital we laid them in the bunks by the doctor's directions, and I hurried back to Malton's cabin, to try and calm the bitter agony of my mind by learning if he yet lived.

Simpson had procured a light, and was leaning over the inanimate body of his master. "Dead, dead—quite dead!" he was sobbing to himself as I entered, and I thought so too when I looked into the hammock. But it was not so.

He revived again; the breath was drawn feebly, the eyes opened with a great effort; wild terror was depicted in them as I bent down, and with a hoarse,

discordant scream as he met my gaze, he half raised himself, and cried in strong accents of awful terror, "Blood! Blood!" while the bright, black, flashing eyes seemed to stand out of their sockets. I looked at my hands—felt my face—they were covered with the blood of the wounded I had helped below.

He fell back exhausted. "Mother—mother; kiss me, mother," came plaintively and indistinctly from the half-open lips. Then, "Mother—pray—my—God! —Saviour—mercy—" and the voice rattled in the throat. One strong agony of every muscle and nerve—and all was over.

* * * * *

The horrors of that dread Christmas Eve often recur to me especially at that holy time, and cause me to bless and thank heaven that I was spared on that awful night; spared for repentance and reparation for sin, and that I was not cut off in the full ripeness and harvest of my iniquity.

The gale seemed to abate after the fore-topmast went, and by the middle of next (Christmas) day the wind had greatly gone down, and the sun coming out, an observation was taken, when we found ourselves quite close to the Cape of Good Hope, and in the course of twenty-four hours were riding safely at anchor in Table Bay.

Will the reader pardon me if I have made him sad by my melancholy tale?

Perhaps he will when he considers that no present happiness can be thoroughly enjoyed without a certain knowledge of the pain and suffering that might be his lot, were it not for the care and goodness of the Creator, who has seen fit in His wisdom to avert, for the present, these miseries.

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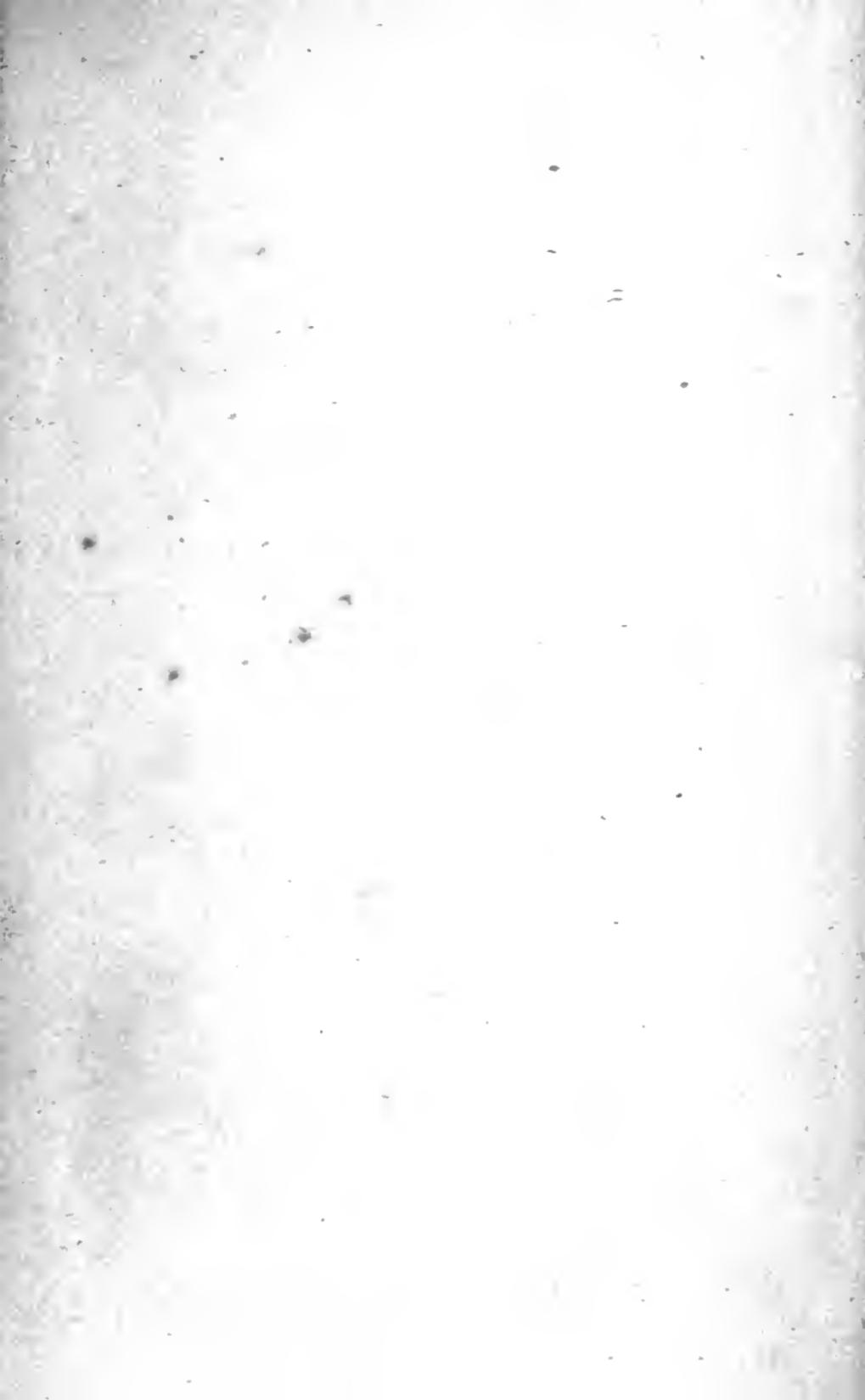
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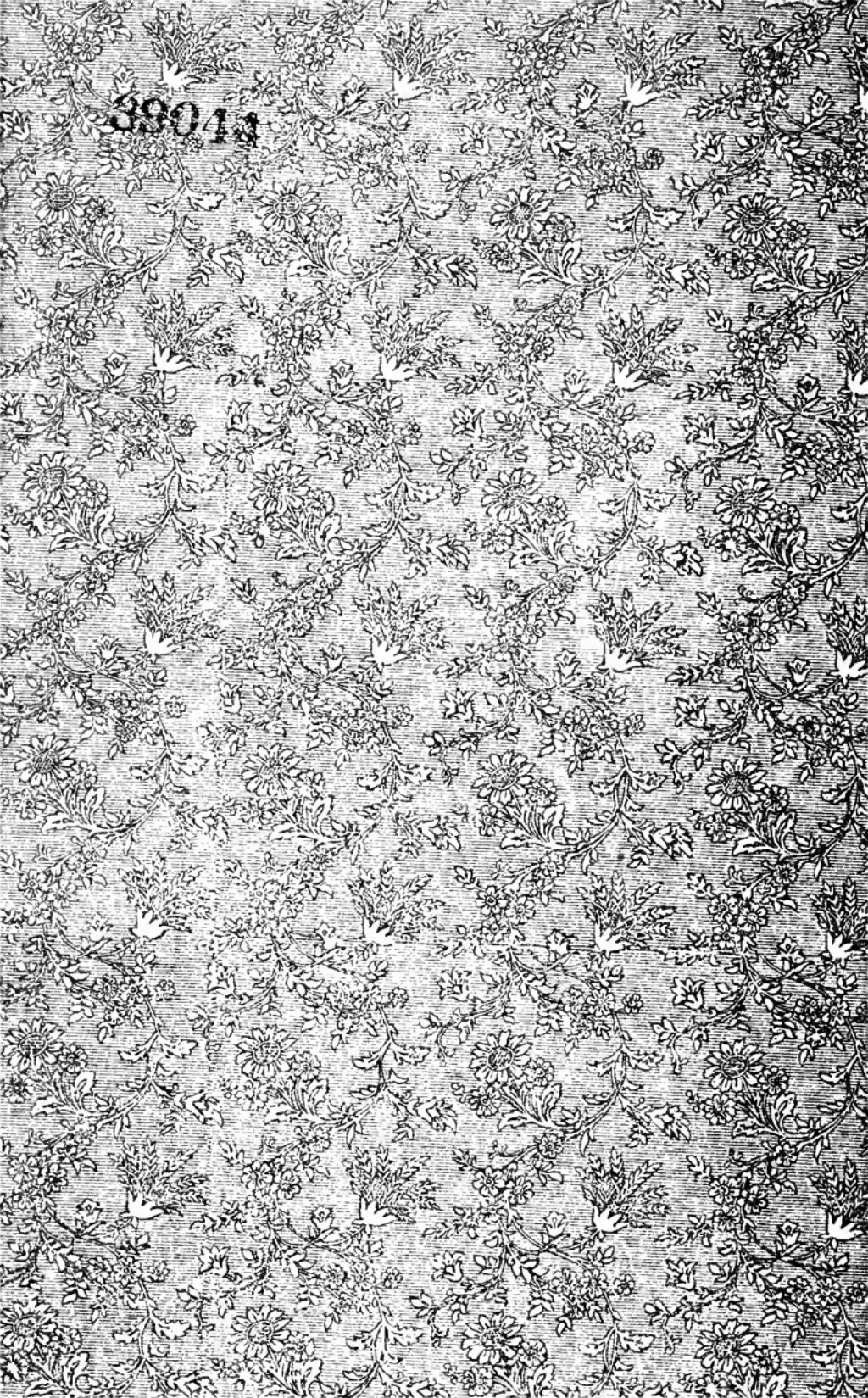
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